



ENVIRONMENTAL LAW INSTITUTE

2000 National Wetlands Awards:

Public Relations Activities
and Results

**VOLUNTEER
LEADERSHIP**



Roma Armbrust and Jean Harris

*Ormond Beach Observers
Ventura and Oxnard, California*

When Jean Harris and Roma Armbrust call a meeting to discuss preservation of Ormond Beach, environmentalists, property owners, and officials from all branches of government flock to the table. These two activists have spent a cumulative total of 36 years championing their cause—preservation of Ormond Beach, an undeveloped remnant of a rare salt marsh located in Oxnard, California.

Ms. Armbrust and Ms. Harris are retired teachers who became conservationists after joining the League of Women Voters. Both have spent countless hours educating the community about the biological value of Ormond's resources, speaking out against ill-conceived development proposals, and increasing community involvement in the planning process for the Ormond Beach area. In 1989, they formed the Ormond Beach Observers, which unified the voice of a number of diverse organizations interested in protecting the wetlands. When the city of Oxnard ultimately formed the Ormond Beach Task Force, these two grandmothers served enthusiastically and patiently. Their tenacity and open-mindedness kept key participants involved and brought the group to final consensus. Earlier this year, the California Coastal Conservancy validated the critical importance of preserving the wetlands by agreeing to acquire a sizable portion for restoration and permanent preservation. As Jean Harris would say, their efforts continue to be "a work in progress" because the city has yet to approve a final development plan for the Ormond Beach area. Undoubtedly, both women will continue to persevere to secure permanent protection for the invaluable Ormond wetlands.

—Kim Uhlich and John Buse, Environmental Defense Centers, Ventura, California

**LAND
STEWARDSHIP
AND
DEVELOPMENT**



Raymond Beck

*Farmer
Marlow, Oklahoma*

Raymond Beck, a retired city employee, has dedicated and managed his 60-acre of land for wildlife for more than 30 years. He has developed and enhanced wetland sites for wood ducks at nesting densities unheard of in south central Oklahoma. Between 500 and 1,000 wood ducks hatch on his property every year.

In this region of the United States, many major streams were cleared of timber and their channels straightened in the 1950s. As a result, wood duck nesting habitat declined drastically. Mr. Beck became concerned and began a wood duck nest box project more than 20 years ago with the construction of two wetlands. Over the years, he has experimented with box clusters, resulting in a high number of boxes in a relatively small area. In cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, he constructed three additional wetlands in 1999, which increased his wetland habitat to nearly 20 acres. In spring 1999, Mr. Beck maintained and monitored a total of 140 wood duck nest boxes, 13 Canada goose nesting structures, and 50 bluebird boxes.

Raymond Beck's wetland project is an outstanding example of what one person can accomplish with limited financial resources, a strong land ethic, hard work, and dedication to wildlife. Over the years, Mr. Beck not only has restored his land to its optimum wildlife habitat conditions, he ardently has advocated for wildlife habitat restoration and has constructed and given out more than 300 wood duck nest boxes, 100 Canada goose nesting structures, and more than 500 bluebird nest boxes to his neighbors, both locally and nationwide.

—Jontie Aldrich, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Tulsa, Oklahoma