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# ELI REPORT

## 2000 National Wetlands Awards presented to seven at Capitol Hill ceremony

Seven conservationists received ELI's 2000 National Wetlands Awards in a Capitol Hill Ceremony held in June before a large gathering of wetlands advocates. Awards were given for Education and Outreach, Land Stewardship and Development, Outstanding Wetlands Program Development, Science Research, and Volunteer Leadership.

Senator Don Nickles (OK) and Representative David E. Price (NC) attended to congratulate their respective constituents.

Representatives from the five cosponsoring agencies presented the awards, including Penelope Dalton (Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), David Davis (Deputy Director, Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency), Phil Janik (Chief Operating Officer, U.S. Forest Service), Paul Schmidt (Deputy Assistant Director, Refuges and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), and Thomas A. Weber (Deputy Chief for Programs, Natural

Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture).

EPA's David Davis stressed the importance of recognizing individual efforts in wetland conservation and protection. "All too often ordinary citizens and their efforts to protect and restore wetland health go unnoticed and unacknowledged," Davis said. "This awards program goes to the heart of what we need in order to protect and sustain our nation's wetlands — caring and hard-working people who motivate others and find ways to get things done."

Davis presented the award for Education and Outreach to Linda Beyt of Lafayette, Louisiana. "Ms. Beyt, a public school teacher for 23 years, has demonstrated a passion for wetland education," Davis said. "Linda has become an educational leader in the state, a partner in research projects, and an instructor of university teachers."

Beyt currently works with the University of Louisiana developing wetland workshops and has created an interactive CD-ROM that will integrate wetlands into Louisiana's

middle school curriculum. The CD-ROM will be distributed to every middle school in Louisiana.

"By sharing our efforts, dedication, enthusiasm, and appreciation with others, we go beyond the printed page of the textbook and touch the future," Beyt said.

Davis also presented the Science and Research award to Ruth Patrick of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "Ruth Patrick has been a leader in wetland research and limnology for more than 60 years," Davis said. "She was the first scientist to assess ecosystem health and to describe the impacts of industrialization using aquatic plant and animal species."

Patrick led research in metropolitan Philadelphia's Tinicum Marsh that contributed to its preservation as the Heinz National Wildlife Refuge. Patrick's recent work has involved gathering and summarizing work on aquatic systems and wetlands done by scientists from all over the world.

The NRCS's Thomas Weber presented the Land Stewardship and Development award to Raymond Beck of Marlow, Oklahoma. "Raymond's remarkable efforts have shown one person can make a difference," Weber said. "He has developed and enhanced wood



National Wetlands Awards winners Derl Carter, Raymond Beck, Jean Harris, Ruth Patrick, Roger Holmes, Roma Armbust, and Linda Beyt.



Representatives of sponsoring agencies: EPA's David Davis, NRCS's Thomas Weber, Forest Service's Phil Janik, FWS's Paul Schmidt, and NOAA's Penelope Dalton.

duck nesting sites for densities that are totally unheard of in south-central Oklahoma."

For nearly 60 years, Beck has devoted his time to restoring and enhancing nesting sites for wood ducks and other avian species after witnessing the decline of the wood duck population following large wetland losses in the 1950s. The four wetlands on this property hatch about a thousand ducks per year. Beck has also provided neighbors near and far with more than 300 wood duck nesting boxes, 100 Canada goose nesting structures, and 500 bluebird nesting boxes.

"Some years we hatch as many as 1,000 little wood ducks, but the past few years haven't been so good, sort of like farming," Beck said, reflecting on the fortunes of wood duck populations. "Some years it gets better and some we don't get as many ducks as we should from the south. Maybe they get shot up in Texas or Louisiana," Beck said, poking fun at Louisiana awardee Beyt.

Phil Janik from the Forest Service presented the Outstanding Program Development award to Derb Carter, an attorney with the Southern Environmental Law Center in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. "Derb is an excellent, committed, and thorough environmental lawyer, but he brings far more to the wetlands protection table than his legal skills," Janik said, quoting nomina-

tor Jan Goldman-Carter. "He knows and loves North Carolina's coastal wetlands from the bottom up and inside out."

Derb Carter is a nationally recognized environmental lawyer who has protected over 220,000 wetland acres by securing their inclusion into the Alligator and Pocahontas Lakes National Wildlife Refuges. In the last 18 months his efforts have led to the protection of thousands of other wetland acres threatened with drainage.

"It's been rewarding to observe the evolving public support and understanding of wetland protection that has emerged in my region of the country and nationwide in the last couple of decades," Carter said.

The FWS's Paul Schmidt presented another Outstanding Wetlands Program Development award to Roger Holmes of St. Paul, Minnesota. "I've worked closely with Roger for the better part of the last decade in a host of areas," Schmidt said. "Minnesota's landscape will be forever changed because of Roger Holmes."

Holmes recently retired as director of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Division of Fish and Wildlife after a 42-year career that included creating the Reinvest in Minnesota program, which has put \$135 million into 450,000 acres of public and private wetlands and other wildlife habitat. Holmes also oversaw the expansion of Minnesota's public lands to more than 1 million acres and helped shape the federal farmland Conservation Reserve Program.

Through his career, Holmes said that "I learned that there's a lot more to managing fish and wildlife than producing ducks and pheasants. The most important thing in resource management is to protect soil and water."

NMFS's Penelope Dalton presented the Volunteer Leadership awards to Jean Harris of Oxnard, California and Roma Armbrust of Ventura, California. "Today we recognize two remarkable women who have worked tirelessly to advance the cause of wetlands conservation, not only for themselves but for future generations,"

Dalton said. "Because of the dedication and energy of these two people we stand at the threshold of preserving and restoring the single most important unprotected wetland in southern California."

In 1989, Harris and Armbrust formed the Ormond Beach Observers to unify the voice of a number of diverse organizations interested in protecting the Ormond Beach wetlands — an undeveloped remnant of an extremely rare salt marsh ecosystem located in Oxnard, California. When the city council formed a task force to solicit community input on how the area should be developed, Harris and Armbrust both served enthusiastically — providing the glue that held the parties together until they reached a final consensus.

Harris provided a history of the team's efforts over the past 18 years, including facing down determined developers, being rescued by the Army Corps of Engineers, and the agreement of the California Coastal Conservancy to acquire a sizable portion of the wetlands.

"Jean and I share many things together," Armbrust said. "But the one thing that stands out is our tenacity. Think we're bulldogs."

This year's selection committee consisted of 16 wetlands experts from private, public, and nonprofit organizations. The committee was charged with selecting these seven winners from more than 90 nominations.



Winner Derb Carter of North Carolina and North Carolina Representative David Price.