

Awards Luncheon June 29, 2015

Members of the Awards Committee are: Ed Boggess, Minnesota; Terry Steinwand, North Dakota; Gregory Johnson, Kentucky; Mark Reiter, Indiana; and myself. I want to thank them for their assistance in choosing the winners. We had 19 nominations for the five main awards.

Award winners are:

The Law Enforcement Officer of the Year award is given to the individual who in the past year has shown superior leadership, initiative, and dedication in their duties. This person should personify achievement, public service, education, and above all natural resource conservation. This award goes to **Gregory Swanson, Indiana**; *award accepted by Greg.*

The Wildlife Biologist of the Year award is given to the individual who has shown an unparalleled initiative towards the better understanding of wildlife and their conservation. This award goes to **John Olson, Wisconsin**; *award accepted by Cathy Stepp.*

The Fisheries Biologist of the Year award is given to the individual who has shown an unparalleled initiative towards the better understanding of fishes and their conservation. This award goes to **Paul D. Calvert, Missouri**; *award accepted by Bob Ziehmer.*

The Spirit of the Shack award is given to the individual who exemplifies the ideals of the great conservationist and educator, Aldo Leopold, and who has contributed to conservation in a superior way. This individual should epitomize stewardship and dedication to fish and wildlife conservation. This award goes to **Scott Walter, Wisconsin**; *award accepted by Cathy Stepp.*

Excellence in Conservation award is given to the agency that has shown excellence in conservation through a specific project. Each member agency would select one project completed in the awards year that exemplifies the goal of fish and wildlife conservation. This award also has perpetual plaque.

The Missouri Stream Team

The Missouri Stream Team Program is a citizen-led effort to conserve Missouri streams. Sponsored by the Missouri Department of Conservation, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and the Conservation Federation of Missouri (CFM), the Stream Team Program focuses on education, stewardship, and advocacy for Missouri stream resources. The Program provides supplies and technical assistance to meet the needs of Stream Teams and their diverse individual goals, and also recognizes Team accomplishments through social media, newsletters, certificates,

and awards. Missouri Stream Team is a national leader in volunteer stream stewardship efforts thanks to the creativity and determination of its members and strong agency support.

The success of the Stream Team Program is a great example of how Missourians value conservation of fish, forests, and wildlife, and how the Conservation Department, DNR, and CFM work with citizens to conserve our natural resources. In the last 25 years, the Missouri Stream Team Program has grown to over 5,000 active Stream Teams consisting of an estimated 90,000 volunteers working to conserve Missouri's rivers and streams. Since 1989, Stream Teams have been an impassioned voice for the protection of streams that Missourians rely on for clean drinking water, quality fishing, and first-class recreational opportunities. The Program merits recognition for its achievement in engaging citizens to act on behalf of Missouri streams.

Due to the nature of the Missouri Stream Team Program and the independence of its members, it is difficult to highlight the accomplishments of a single Team or project. However, the accomplishments of the Program as a whole over the last 25 years are remarkable.

While the Program began as a stewardship-oriented endeavor to remove litter from waterways, Teams have expanded their interests and efforts in stream conservation over the last 25 years. A few examples of the 36 types of activities reported by Teams include litter pickups, water quality monitoring, educational presentations, letters to elected officials, riparian restoration, invasive species monitoring, and storm drain stenciling. Recently, rain barrel and rain garden projects to reduce stormwater runoff are becoming more popular, and Teams are finding creative ways to reach their peers and elected officials using social media.

To demonstrate the scope of Program accomplishments, over the last 25 years Teams have reported more than:

- 11,000 tons of litter removed from waterways (2,200,000 pounds);
- 25,000 water quality monitoring trips;
- 270,000 trees planted along streams;
- 17,500 storm drains stenciled with the message *Dump No Waste, Drains to Stream*;
- 2,900 educational presentations given to inform communities, youth, and other groups about watershed issues; and
- 2,305,000 hours committed to the Program since 1989.

Because of the tremendous scope of achievements by the citizens of Missouri fostered by their dedicated sponsors, the Missouri Stream Team Program is worthy of recognition for the Excellence in Conservation Award by the Midwest Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies.

Award accepted by Bob Ziehmer.

Special Recognition Service Awards are intended to honor any person or group who has made an outstanding contribution to: the wildlife profession; to the general areas of wildlife conservation, management, or science; or to a specific area of endeavor, species, community, ecosystem, region, etc. In addition, any person or group who has made such a noteworthy contribution in a discrete area over the short or long term is

eligible for nomination for a Special Recognition Service Award. We have two of these awards this year.

This award goes to **Sharon M. Schafer**, Michigan; In August, 2009 Joe Kramer announced his desire to step down as MAFWA Secretary/Treasurer after 20 years of voluntary service. Michigan DNR Director Becky Humphries offered her Chief of Office of Budget, Sharon Schafer, as a replacement for the treasurer duties if the functions of secretary and treasurer could be separated. The MAFWA by-laws were subsequently amended to create an office of Treasurer and an office of Recording Secretary. In early 2010, Sharon Schafer assumed MAFWA treasurer functions and Sheila Kemmis accepted the Recording Secretary duties.

As you have seen this morning, both Sharon and Sheila sit at the Director's table fulfilling their very critical functions. However, after over 5 years of faithful and exemplary service as our voluntary MAFWA Treasurer, Sharon has requested to be replaced at the end of this calendar year.

It is with a great deal of gratitude that we wish to honor Sharon. Sharon has not only managed all aspects of our Association's finances, including but not limited to invoicing, payables, grant management, account reconciliation, conference accounting, Federal tax form submissions, financial statement preparation, etc.—she has done so on her own personal time and with great precision. She has passed two professional audits with flying colors.

Sharon, in recognition of your high degree of professionalism and dedicated service to the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, it is my distinct honor to present you with this special recognition award. *Award accepted by Sharon.*

The second award goes to I nominate the **Northern Long-eared Bat (NLEB) Workgroup** that successfully organized and oversaw the effort to provide sound scientific and biological input and comment to the US Fish & Wildlife Service relative to proposed listing of the NLEB under the Endangered Species Act. The Workgroup with the guidance and support of Chief Zody from Ohio successfully organized and effectively presented state interest and the ultimate outcome was a decision to list the NLEB as Threatened with a 4(d) rule. The listing decision and the 4(d) rule determination allowed for effective consideration of state management considerations. The Directors identified the members of the work group (Mr. Baker, Ms. Crain, Mr. Kennedy and Ms. Norris) and Director Zody to serve as their primary liaison to the group within 2 weeks of the conclusion of the MAFWA meeting. They conducted numerous weekly conference calls and over the course of 3 months, the group identified a location for the Workshop (Minneapolis), developed an agenda and goals for the Work Shop, solicited additional background material, research and data for the Work Shop, identified and invited experts to attend and present at the Work Shop and developed an invitation list. The invitations were sent to all 39 potentially affected state fish & wildlife agencies, state foresters, and regional offices of the USFWS and US Forest Service (USFS). The group had to work through differing opinions and policy positions of not only the state members of MAFWA, but the Northeast and Southeast regional associations and the Northern Area State Foresters and the Southeast State Foresters associations. In addition, the work group had to be cognizant of the ESA listing process and protocols to ensure compliance with the end product coming out of the Work Shop.

In early October, the Workshop was conducted over two and one-half days. The first day consisted of defining the issue and presentations and updates on the latest scientific and biological information available. The remainder of the Workshop consisted of developing recommendations in the form of formal comments to consider for submission to the USFWS. At the Workshop, the group provided insight, leadership and helped facilitate discussions. During breaks and after each day's meetings, the group would meet and discuss, analyze and debate (sometimes vigorously!) the day's results and direction for the next day. Each member of the work group maintained a high level of professionalism and decorum, at times working to develop a consensus and providing Director Zody with timely feedback and questions for the MAFWA leadership. The end result of the work group's efforts were the development of a consensus set of recommendations to the USFWS on the listing of NLEB, to the point that not only MAFWA and SEAFWA signed on to the comment letter, but so did the Northern and Southeastern State Forester associations. This unprecedented effort and collaboration deserves recognition, and the work of the NLEB Work Group has laid a solid foundation for state and regional agencies/associations to work together cooperatively on future potential listing decisions by the USFWS. *Award accepted by Scott Zody.*

Sagamore of the Forest, Fields and Streams –

"A sagamore is the head of northeastern Native American tribe. The word is generally synonymous with sachem, although sometimes a sachem is considered a chief of the first rank, and a sagamore one of the second rank. Sagamore can also refer to great man among the tribe to whom the chief would look for wisdom and advice." This honor is bestowed on any Director or upper level staff member that has contributed significant service to MAFWA. To qualify for this recognition, recipients must provide 4 years of service to MAFWA, have a 75 percent meeting attendance and serve on one or more committees. This award goes to:

Jeff Vonk, 4 years Iowa and 8 years South Dakota. *Award accepted by Jeff.*

Marc Miller, 6 years Illinois. *Award accepted by Wayne Rosenthal.*

Scott Gunderson, 4 years Wisconsin. *Award accepted by Cathy Stepp.*

The Past President's Award is given to **Ed Boggess, Minnesota** who has served as the MAFWA President for the past year. Keith will receive this award at the business meeting on Wednesday.

President's Award – (presented by Ed Boggess Minnesota) – U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Midwest Region, presented to Tom Melius.