

2010 Environmental Service Awards

Congratulations to this year's recipients

George Bates

Long Term Conservation Leadership

George Bates has been actively involved in conservation activities in the Town of Weston for over 46 years, as a Conservation Commissioner and as a leader of the Weston Forest and Trail Association. Appointed to the Commission in 1988, George served as Chair for 19 years and continues to be a vital asset to the board. Working through both the Conservation Commission and the Forest and Trail Association, George has steadily added dozens of parcels, conservation restrictions (CRs), and trail easements to Weston's 2,000 acres of conservation land. In a landmark legal case, George's precise knowledge of the boundaries of Weston's protected open space led to the discovery of a CR encroachment and a precedent-setting case with statewide implications for the protection of conservation land. But perhaps George's greatest contribution is Weston's system of some 100 miles of trails. He laid out many of the trails, and was largely responsible for creating the first set of trail maps more than thirty years ago. Today it is possible to walk from one corner of Weston to the other almost entirely on trails, because George has patiently stitched the system together one easement or parcel at a time. George truly believes in promoting conservation and passive recreation for the generations to come.

David Johnson

Conservation Commissioner of the Year

In 1969, Chairman David Johnson called the very first meeting of the Palmer Conservation Commission to order. There began a remarkable career of community and environmental service. Chairman Johnson is still at it! From the outset, David saw land conservation and river protection as keys to natural resource stewardship. In the early 1970s he partnered with the Army Corps to study Palmer's four rivers, worked to secure one of the first Agricultural Preservation Restrictions in the area; and helped establish an open space fund. In the 1980s David led efforts to name contaminated riverfront a Superfund site (leading to cleanup), designate the Quaboag River as Wild and Scenic, pass a wetlands bylaw, and convert antique roadways to public walkways managed by the Commission. In the 1990s, under David's leadership, the Commission developed a conservation land management plan which included active forestry. Then he secured legislation allowing the board to sell timber to fund land maintenance. With his guidance a long-term effort to anticipate and finance land conservation initiatives was recently begun. Over the past 40 years, the seeds of active resource conservation and stewardship planted by David Johnson have taken root in Palmer. Today the Town enjoys an extraordinary diversity of open spaces and recreational opportunities on over 500 acres of protected land.

Sylvia Willard

Conservation Administrator of the Year

Sylvia Willard has distinguished herself in a decade of service as Conservation Administrator for the Town of Carlisle. She performs the usual duties of the position in an exemplary fashion, helping the Conservation Commission perform in an efficient and consistent manner. Sylvia also does much more, demonstrating leadership in working with residents and developers to build support for conservation throughout the community. She established and organizes monthly Conservation Coffees that connect residents to a variety of environmental topics and taps local experts to share this information in an engaging yet informal format. Sylvia communicates in a most effective way with the public, including violators, helping them understand regulations and processes and the reasons why wetlands protection is so important. Notably, Sylvia accomplishes this in a friendly and helpful manner. She has developed a stellar reputation as being fair and consistent, thereby building public support for wetlands regulation. She helped form a Land Stewardship Committee, initiated annual vernal pool education programs, and works regularly with the local Trails Committee and Conservation Restriction Advisory Committee. Sylvia also helped the Commission revise the Carlisle Wetlands Bylaw and update the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. Throughout all of her work, Sylvia is recognized as "the personification of an effective conservation advocate."

Ellen Douglas, P.E., P.G., Ph.D.*Outstanding Environmental Education Leadership*

Ellen Douglas is a professor of hydrology at UMass-Boston who is on the front lines of quantifying how rivers, harbors, and wetlands in Massachusetts and elsewhere are changing. Her research involves the analysis of hydrologic processes and the impacts of human water use on the hydrologic cycle. Her specific research activities include examining sustainable water management issues at the watershed to regional scale. Her work focuses on estimating the impacts of climate change on hydroclimatology and coastal systems, monitoring the effects of river restoration activities and using economic models for promoting sustainable water use. Through an active and engaged graduate student program Ellen has been instrumental in quantifying the geomorphic effects of the Red Brook restoration in Wareham and Plymouth. She is also studying the economic costs and environmental benefits of dam removal, and how that affects the decision-making process around dam removal versus repair. Ellen has also been looking at environmental justice issues. She is investigating whether the rising waters of Boston Harbor could inundate homes near Chelsea Creek. One supporter of her nomination sums up her commitment: "Ellen is a terrific and caring professor, an energetic researcher, and works tirelessly to translate science into on-the-ground actions that protect the environment."

James Kenneth (Ken) Taylor*Lifetime Achievement in Natural Resource Protection (Posthumous)*

Ken Taylor first went to Westfield as a Red Cross volunteer, helping victims of the devastating Flood of 1955. One year later he accepted a position at Westfield State Teachers College. In the 1960s when it became Westfield State College, Ken helped found the Biology Department. He taught at Westfield for 40 years. Ken also chaired the Westfield Conservation Commission for over 40 years and was recently recognized as the longest serving chairperson in Massachusetts' history. He was a founding member of the Westfield River Watershed Association and Winding River Land Conservancy (where he held leadership positions including president), and served on the board of the Barnes Aquifer Protection Advisory Committee. Ken tirelessly advocated for our wetlands and environment, and volunteered for water restoration projects, Habitat for Humanity and Meals on Wheels. He organized a group of students to help in New York after September 11th. He was a longtime member of the Hampden Conservation District, Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts, and Westfield River Watershed Association, and was long affiliated with the National Science Foundation, National Science Teachers Association and Massachusetts Envirothon. Ken was a teacher both in and out of the classroom - described by one friend and colleague as "an encyclopedia of environmental knowledge."