

Governor's Conservation Achievement Award Winners

Conservationist of the Year — John McMillan (Raleigh) - A passionate conservationist for over 30 years, McMillan has served on the boards of The Nature Conservancy and Museum of Natural Sciences, improving science education statewide while serving as a scoutmaster for young conservationists. McMillan played major roles in the creation of the Natural Heritage Trust Fund and Clean Water Management Trust Fund.

Wildlife Conservationist of the Year — Mark Craig (Greensboro) - As Chair of the Wildlife Resources Commission's Habitat, Non-game and Endangered Species Committee, Craig uses sound science and leadership to advance sustainable recommendations for wildlife management. Craig has ensured accurate documentation of nongame species through frequent, scientifically-supported updates to the State's listed species list.

Sportsman of the Year — Eddie Smith (Greenville) - Smith has a strong passion for introducing others to the joys of hunting, fishing and water sports, leading personal conservation efforts such as the restoration of Grimes Plantation in Pitt County to make a 3,000-acre hunting preserve. Smith established the NC Chapter of Coastal Conservation Association and was a powerful voice for the Outdoor Heritage Advisory Committee and the passage of the Outdoor Heritage Act, demonstrating his dedication to conservation for future generations.

Land Conservationist of the Year — Margaret Newbold (Vilas) - With more than 20 years of exemplary service for land conservation through her work with the Conservation Trust for NC, Newbold has forged partnerships across the state to support the growth and development of local land trusts. She focused on diversifying the land trust community and making conservation more inclusive through her internship program and support of AmeriCorps programs.

Water Conservationist of the Year — Joe Mickey (State Road) - As the Stream Restoration Coordinator for the Wildlife Resources Commission, Mickey has dedicated his career as a naturalist to stream restoration, working with streamside and riparian landowners through conservation easements. A founding board member for grassroots conservation groups such as the Yadkin River Trail Association, Mickey is a proven conservation leader and ally who has mentored over two generations of aquatic resource professionals.

Environmental Educator of the Year — Jenna Hartley (Hillsborough) - Having taught as a public high school science teacher for seven years, Hartley's goal is to bridge the gap between science researchers and the classroom. As an EPA fellow, Hartley created K-12 curricula through the EnviroAtlas Project, using EPA research and training tools to coach teachers across the state in environmental education strategies, while using her bilingual skills to reach diverse populations in NC.

Legislator of the Year — Rep. Richard Burr - Senator Burr is the leading legislative champion for the landmark Land and Water Conservation Fund, working tirelessly to ensure its security through reauthorization and full funding. Senator Burr also played a major role in the passage of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Reauthorization Act of 2017, a critical step in expanding protected areas in Western North Carolina.

Forest Conservationist of the Year — Fred P. Hain (Raleigh) - An accomplished forest entomologist at NC State University, Dr. Hain founded the Forest Restoration Alliance in 2007, with its goal of restoring healthy forests and landscapes by addressing invasive pest threats to native trees. Hain has dedicated his research to observing and breeding adelgid-resistant hemlock trees to promote forest regrowth.

Municipal Conservationist of the Year — City of Concord - Achieving certified Community Wildlife Habitat status, the City of Concord has supported conservation through its signing of the Mayor's Monarch Pledge and its creation of a native plant project with a local juvenile detention facility. The City competed in the Global City Nature Challenge, partnering with local schools, community groups and libraries to organize four major community-wide citizen science events that taught children about native flora and fauna.

Wildlife Volunteer of the Year — Beth Heile (Valdese) - Known for her dedication to the Valdese community and conservation, Heile worked for years to improve natural resource protection and park land for Valdese citizens. As the founder and president of the Friends of Valdese Rec, Heile helped procure private and public grants for the purchase of 302 acres of wooded lakefront property on Lake Rhodiss for a new park.

Hunter Safety Educator of the Year — L.C. Jones (Warsaw) - Jones first became committed to conservation as a Hunter Education instructor for Duplin County Schools where he was instrumental in getting Duplin County's physical education teachers certified as Hunter Education instructors. Due to his tireless passion for conservation and hunter safety, all eighth graders in Duplin County are now offered Hunter Education.

NCWF Chapter of the Year — South Wake Conservationists (Holly Springs) - The South Wake Conservationists established a deer donation site south of Raleigh where hunters have donated venison meat to thousands of needy community members. Chapter leaders facilitated the signing of the Mayor's Monarch Pledge in Holly Springs and offered engaging programming to the local community.

NCWF Affiliate of the Year — North Carolina Chapter of The Wildlife Society - The NC Chapter of The Wildlife Society brings together wildlife professionals and scholars across the state, dedicated to furthering science-based research and management. The organization established a mentorship program where wildlife professionals mentor students from its four chapter universities and hosted the national Annual Wildlife Society Conference with record numbers in attendance.

Natural Resources Scientist of the Year — Theodore Simons (Cary) - In his 34 years as a wildlife ecologist, Simons has strived to improve species conservation and monitoring through his development of various methods including an experimental simulation system for bird songs and frog calls. His work on conserving endangered species through improving ecological survey methods has influenced the programs of organizations such as the National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Conservation Organization of the Year — Land for Tomorrow - This coalition of conservation advocates is dedicated to increasing land and water conservation in North Carolina. Funding for the states' natural resource trust funds that support parks, farmland, and gamelands is due in great part to the dogged efforts of the coalition.

Business Conservationist of the Year — IBM (Research Triangle Park) - This certified Wildlife and Industry Together (WAIT) site has a robust conservation program, focusing on energy and water conservation, recycling, green buildings, and wildlife habitats. Recent Wildlife@Work projects include bluebird nest box installation, planting butterfly gardens, and the creation of habitats for aquatic wildlife on the site's pond. The 225-member Green Team also participated in a red-tailed hawk nesting project.

Wildlife Enforcement Officer of the Year — D.J. Woods (Pilot Mountain) - Master Officer Woods has dedicated the past decade to the Wildlife Resources Commission's Law Enforcement Division as a public safety officer, protecting wildlife in Stokes County. Woods has effectively used technology to document multiple illegal turkey baiting sites in his patrol area through trail cameras, interviews and social media search warrants. Woods is an innovative, persistent leader who leads others in protecting wildlife resources.

Marine Patrol Officer of the Year — Jason Parker (Wilmington) - Officer Parker has been a member of the NC Marine Patrol since 2010 where he has used his resources and knowledge to protect NC waters and species from offenders. He has extensive experience working with and apprehending those involved in flounder gigging, mechanical clamming operations, shrimping and shell fishing cases. Officer Parker has been quick to embrace technology like thermal imaging cameras and GIS applications to track and witness violations.

2018 Conservation Hall of Fame Inductee — William E. (Bill) Holman

Bill Holman exemplifies the passion and dedication of a lifelong conservationist. He served as director of the State Policy Program at Duke University's Nicholas Institute, as executive director of the state's Clean Water Management Trust Fund, and as Secretary of the Department of Environment & Natural Resources. He is the current state director of The Conservation Fund.