

2012 WCC AWARDS

2012 Awards

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THE WISCONSIN CONSERVATION CONGRESS

STATEWIDE CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION

The Wisconsin Conservation Congress Awards Committee has selected **Milwaukee School of Engineering Ducks Unlimited** as the recipient of the **Statewide Conservation Organization of the Year** award. The organization was recognized and presented with the award at the annual Conservation Congress statewide meeting at The Holiday Inn in Manitowoc.

MSOE DU was started in 2007 by students and is Wisconsin's first college DU chapter. Although the school is relatively small with only about 5,000 students, MSOE DU is ranked 3rd among the 275 college DU chapters in the nation. MSOE DU ranked higher than other collegiate DU chapters such as Texas A & M and North Carolina, who's schools have over 60,000 students.



Milwaukee School of Engineering Ducks Unlimited was named the 2012 Statewide Organization of the Year by the Conservation Congress. MSOEDU member Andrew Limmer accepting the club's award.

Perhaps even more impressive than that, MSOE DU, with a membership of 15, raised \$30,000 last year. The money was used to help fund habitat work and provide opportunities for both members and non-members of this organization.

MSOE DU members participate in placing wood duck houses in prime nesting areas across the state, hosting an annual spring banquet with games, raffles, and a silent auction for over 250 people, and hold an annual shooting event at Wild Wings Sportsman's Club in Campbellsport. This shoot hosts over 200 shooters and participants are eligible for raffles depending on the number of clay birds they hit.

As always, the Conservation Congress thanks each of these organizations and their membership for their continued devotion to Wisconsin's natural resources and the mission of the Department of Natural Resources. The projects that these organizations have undertaken to protect and restore natural ecosystems are impressive, as are the educational opportunities provided. Once again, congratulations to the 2012 award recipients!

LOCAL CONSERVATION ORGANIZATION

The **Beaver Dam Conservationists** was honored as the recipient of the **Local Conservation Club of the Year** award. The Beaver Dam Conservationists, with 200 members, have achieved remarkable conservation successes in the Beaver Dam Area.

The Beaver Dam Hunter Education program utilizes the club grounds for shotgun and trap shooting. The club donates the use of the range and the clay pigeons for the hunter safety classes and many members assist in the instruction of the trap shooting. In 2011 the Beaver Dam Conservationists donated \$6,000 to establish a trap shooting program for Beaver Dam High School. This year there are 35 kids in grades 6-12 that are participating on the trap team.

The club has enrolled 60 acres of the club grounds into CRP and CREP set-aside programs for habitat enhancement. They have also donated \$250 annually to the Lake Association for placement of buoys in Beaver Dam Lake to facilitate shoreline protection.

The Beaver Dam Conservationists partnered with the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association to construct a handicap accessible blind for waterfowl hunting on club grounds. The organization also donates funds and volunteers for the annual kids fisheriee on Beaver Dam Lake. The club hosts an annual game feed banquet and fundraiser with the profits on ticket sales donated to local non-profits and organizations such as Ducks Unlimited, Wings Over Wisconsin, Lost Lake Association and the Cancer Society. Last year, the club raised \$2,800 for these ventures.

Additionally, the club donates \$500 annually to the Youth Outdoor Expo at the Dodge County Fairgrounds and many club members and directors donate their time to make this event possible.



Beaver Dam Conservationists members Dale Maas (left) and Todd Cook (right) accepting their award for Local Conservation Club of the Year.

WCC HEAVY LIFTER OF THE YEAR

Dale Maas recognized as the Conservation Congress Heavy Lifter Award Recipient



Dale Maas accepting his award from WCC Chairman, Rob Bohmann.

In recent years the Wisconsin Conservation Congress has begun to give out their Heavy Lifter Award to honor a deserving delegate who embodies the ideals of the Congress and works to improve this organization, is dedicated to the conservation of our natural resources and continuing our outdoor heritage, and has selflessly served the people of Wisconsin through countless hours of dedicated service. This year's winner exemplifies all of these characteristics.

Dale Maas is beginning his 32 year on the Conservation Congress representing the citizens of Dodge County; and served 16 of those years on the Executive Council. He chairs the Great Lakes Committee, is the secretary of the Rules and Resolutions Committee, and sits on the Outreach Committee. He has also volunteered to participate in the Strategic Planning Committee. In fact, that was one of the main reasons Dale is receiving this award. Dale volunteers for anything and everything, Dale selflessly gives of his time and knowledge. The Congress has always been able to call on Dale when they need someone to perform a task or represent them and Dale humbly takes up the call.

Dale also, is a driving force of the successful Outdoor Education Expo held annually in Dodge County. Since 2006 this hands-on event has brought the classroom to life for about 25,000 kids, providing a free, fun outdoor experience and inspiring children to become active outdoor enthusiasts. And the success of this event is due in large part to Dale's behind the scenes work.

EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

The Conservation Congress has chosen **Cathy Chybowski** as the **Conservation Educator of the Year**. Each year the Wisconsin Conservation Congress honors a deserving individual who dedicates themselves to educating others about the wise use and conservation of Wisconsin's natural resources and environment.

Cathy Chybowski was nominated by one of her former students, Evan Eifler, and this is what he had to say about his teacher:

"I was one of Mrs. Chybowski's students five years ago and have kept in touch ever since. I can say from personal experience that Mrs. Chybowski has changed lives and inspired a conservation ethic in a large number of youth over her long teaching career (me being one of them). I am confident that without the patient guidance of Mrs. Chybowski, I would not be where I am today and a generation of conservation leaders would be missing. Mrs. Chybowski worked as a high school teacher at Kettle Moraine High School for many years. She taught both Biology and Advanced Placement Environmental Studies. She was also the advisor for Caretakers of the Environment (the environmental club of the school). Before becoming a teacher she worked for the DNR and was critical in reestablishing bluebird populations around Southern Wisconsin. As Mrs. Chybowski retired last year, I can't imagine a more fitting way to thank her for what she has done for the environmental community than this award. Mrs. Chybowski is also very active with the Nature Conservancy (where she helped me get an internship) and hosts Saturday student work parties at Lulu Lake Preserve and Lapham Peak State Natural Area."

Evan would have like to be here today to watch Mrs. Chybowski receive this award, but he is currently studying conservation in Cape Town, Africa. When told that Cathy had won the award, he replied in his email "I am so proud."

A video clip from Gathering Waters was shared, which exemplifies why Cathy Chybowski is the Educator of the Year: <http://www.gatheringwaters.org/land-trust-stories/the-next-generation-of-conservation-leaders/>

And this year the Conservation Congress is also proud to be able to recognize such a deserving individual who has made such a lasting impression on so many. Cathy Chybowski- for your dedication to the youth of this state and for your commitment to continuing our conservation legacy - thank you!



Cathy Chybowski accepting the 2012 Educator of the Year Award from WCC Chairman Rob Bohmann.

WCC RECOGNIZES DEPARTMENT STAFF

At its Annual Convention in May 2012 the Wisconsin Conservation Congress (WCC) recognized several DNR employees for their ongoing, outstanding work on behalf of the natural resources of the state.

Kent Van Horn Recognized for Cooperative Wildlife Management Efforts with WCC

Kent received a Masters Degree from University of Missouri-Columbia, conducting waterfowl research in Alaska. Since then he's worked as both a local and regional land manager and field supervisor in central and southern Florida, managing areas such as the Everglades. In 1998, he took an opportunity to return to his roots in Wisconsin, taking a job with the DNR Forestry Division as a state forest specialist. He then transferred into his current position as the Bureau of Wildlife Management's Migratory Gamebird Specialist in 2004.

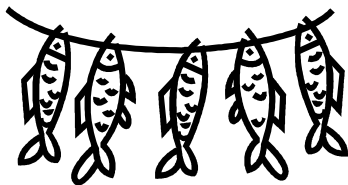
Kent serves on regional technical committees for gamebirds from ducks and geese to wood cock and doves. He carefully collects and considers data in management decision and he stays in touch with biologists in other states and provinces to see how they can work together on science-based management. All the while, Kent is also a tireless advocate for Wisconsin hunters on these regional technical committees.



Kent Van Horn accepting the 2012 Wildlife Management Award

Kent is an avid waterfowl hunter, but he typically has little time to hunt because of to his dedication to his job and service to his community, spending countless hours improving hunting opportunities for others. Kent does a tremendous job of considering both the science and human dimensions of waterfowl management in his recommendations and decisions. He considers the scientific data in his management decisions, but he also relies heavily on the survey data and input from hunters when making recommendations on season frameworks and hunting regulations. He regularly meets with the Conservation Congress migratory committee, keeping in close contact with the committee chair, Dick Koerner, on waterfowl and migratory bird issues. He regularly keeps in touch with various state and local conservation organizations and he invites these partners to his DNR migratory gamebird committee meetings and stakeholder meetings before making recommendations to the Natural Resources Board. Kent is a regularly featured speaker at the annual Wisconsin Waterfowl Hunters Conference.

Other ways Kent has worked for the migratory gamebird hunters of Wisconsin have included coordinating the development of the Wisconsin waterfowl strategic plan, developing duck and goose season frameworks that meet the needs of the majority of hunters, working closely with the Conservation Congress Migratory Committee on adding a third waterfowl hunting zone for the Mississippi River, and pursuing an expansion of open water hunting opportunities. He has also been instrumental in coordinating the development of an eastern Sandhill Crane Management Plan that opens the door for eastern states to pursue a sandhill crane hunting season, working with wildlife managers to expand the dove field program on wildlife areas, as well as investigating the potential for a sea duck season.



WCC Fisheries Management Award goes to Paul Peeters

The 2012 Conservation Congress Fisheries Biologist of the Year Award goes to Paul Peeters, a Fisheries Supervisor who recently retired after 31 years of dedicated service to the people and natural resources of the state of Wisconsin.

Paul began his career on July 30, 1979 as a Fish Manager Trainee stationed at Brule, where he was already working as a Project Biologist on assessment of the fish populations of the Brule River. In 1980, Paul was assigned his first permanent station as the Assistant Fish Manager at Two Rivers. He was responsible for management of inland fish populations and Lake Michigan fish assessments. His inland duties included Manitowoc County and Kewaunee. He implemented the complex chemical treatment and rehabilitation of Carstens Lake including and followed up with an aeration system to prevent winterkill. He conducted onboard monitoring of commercial fisheries, operated salmon rearing ponds, instituted coded wire tag studies to evaluate Chinook salmon management and conducted sport fish creel surveys. He developed techniques for the evaluation of the forage fish commercial trawl fishery which led to changes from the massive harvest of mostly alewife to a targeted rainbow smelt fishery for human consumption. Paul was an original member of the "Dive Team" and utilized SCUBA diving to evaluate the mortality of sport fish gilled in the mesh of commercial trap nets.

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WCC RECOGNIZES DEPARTMENT STAFF

In 1993, Paul took a lateral transfer to be the Lake Michigan Fisheries Biologist at Sturgeon Bay. His primary duties included assessments of the lake whitefish populations, calculation of the commercial whitefish harvest quota, evaluation of salmon return to the Strawberry Creek and Kewaunee River weirs, trout and salmon diet studies, and creel surveys in northern Lake Michigan. In 2006, Paul was promoted to Fisheries Supervisor at Sturgeon Bay. He was responsible for the Lakeshore Fish Team with management responsibilities in Green Bay, Lake Michigan and the inland counties of Door, Kewaunee, Manitowoc and Calumet. He supervised the operation and cruise schedule of the 50 foot research vessel R/V Barney Devine, working with the boat captain to maintain the highest standards for safety. He incorporated the "Dive Team" in numerous innovative surveys including use of underwater video. He worked with other states and management agencies under the auspices of the Great Lakes Fisheries Commission. He was a Wisconsin representative on the Lake Michigan Technical Committee and served on the Lake Michigan Salmonid Work Group, Lake Trout Task Group and the Council of Lake Committees Mass Marking Task Group. Paul was awarded the 2006 Northeast Region Water Division "Employee of the Year" for his leadership of station staff. His last project in a line of major accomplishment was planning and construction of the new 60 foot research vessel, R/V Coregonus. The updated boat, with advanced technical equipment, multiple fishing capabilities, and greater travel speed, will replace the R/V Barney Devine, built by the same contractor in 1937.

Darrell Waldera, Training Director, Awarded Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

Throughout his career, Darrel has contributed to the protection of our natural resources, public safety, and officer safety through the roles he has played in the warden service over the course of his 29 year career. He will be retiring in July after the graduation of the 2012 recruit class. Darrel refers to himself as a "kid from the hill country." He was born and raised just outside of Arcadia in Trempealeau County. He graduated 1977 from Arcadia High School and went on to graduate from UW Stevens Point in 1983 with a B.S. degree majoring in Wildlife Management and Environmental Law Enforcement.

Darrel was hired as one of 18 new recruit conservation wardens in the Class of 1984. He was assigned to the Friendship station in Adams County in September of 1984. In 1990, he transferred to the field warden station in Pierce County, serving as the warden there until the fall of 1994. In 1994, Darrel was promoted to the rank of Warden Supervisor at Wisconsin Rapids. There he directed the law enforcement efforts of conservation wardens and deputy wardens in Wood, Portage, Adams, Juneau and Marathon Counties.

In 1999, Darrel became the first statewide tactical training officer for the conservation wardens. In this capacity he was responsible for ensuring that all DNR wardens met state standards for all areas of tactical training. He served as a representative on the WI Department of Justice Tactical Firearms Training Committee and contributed to writing the law enforcement training manual for all Wisconsin police officers. Darrel always said he felt it was his responsibility to ensure the wardens go home safe to their families at the end of the day.

In 2004, Darrel became the Bureau of Law Enforcement Training Director. In this role he is responsible for the leadership, supervision, and management of overall training program in the warden service. This includes the recruitment, hiring, training, and supervision of recruit wardens, recertification and in-service law enforcement training, and the Bureau's career development and executive development programs. During Darrel's tenure as training director from 2004 to the present, he has hired 68 permanent wardens in 7 different recruit classes. This means more than one-third of the warden service has been hired and trained on Darrel's watch. In addition, Darrel was responsible for hiring 20 Deputy Warden Water Guards for aquatic invasive species enforcement in three different classes. Several of the Water Guards have gone on to be full-time conservation wardens.

Over the course of his career Darrel's high caliber training and leadership has left many of his fingerprints on the warden service. The rapidly changing world the warden service operates in requires continuous adaptation to new realities. Responding to the challenges requires new strategies, tactics, competencies, equipment and training. Darrel's work in the tactical training realm has ensured our wardens have gone home safe at the end of the day. On a daily basis, our wardens answer the call to service in extremely dangerous and life threatening circumstances. Because of the training program Darrel established over the years, our wardens are prepared and have the tools to respond to these threats and protect themselves, the public they serve, and our natural resources.



Darrell Waldera, the 2012 WCC Law Enforcement Officer of the Year

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THE WISCONSIN CONSERVATION CONGRESS

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*"Let us work to together
to properly manage
and wisely use our
natural resources..."*
- Prolog of the Congress Creed

We're on the web!
Visit dnr.wi.gov and
search for
"Conservation Congress"



WCC Delegates volunteering
their time at the WCC display

WCC RECOGNIZES DEPARTMENT STAFF

It goes without saying that hiring 68 conservation wardens is a conservation legacy that will continue to serve the State of Wisconsin for generations to come. The wardens Darrel hired and trained will protect the people and natural resources years to come, and they in turn will become the leadership that will take the warden service into the future. Darrel leads by example and his peers will tell you that his commitment to the core values of pride in the organization, professionalism, respect, integrity, and dedication to duty was always obvious and unwavering.

Congress chooses Mike Nice, Richland County, as the Conservation Waterfowl Officer of the Year

Warden Mike Nice is a veteran field warden stationed in Richland County. He also assists with enforcement issues on the Mississippi River with his neighboring wardens.

Warden Nice is heavily involved with waterfowl education. With the Richland County area not being a high use waterfowl area, Mike has found more time to promote and educate the public on waterfowl issues. He uses his close ties to the community to present education programs at local schools and hunter safety classes. He has taken the opportunity to create his own program to introduce youth to waterfowl hunting and organizing a youth waterfowl event that incorporated both education and a mentored youth waterfowl hunt. Warden Nice has worked closely with the Grant County Sportsmen's Alliance who have now taken on the program as one of their initiatives.

Mike has a unique wetland environmental law enforcement program in Richland County. Due to its rural background, Warden Nice deals with a large amount of environmental complaints related to wetlands. His reputation with the community allows him to efficiently and effectively resolve most complaints without having to use formal enforcement to ensure compliance.

Since Richland County isn't exactly a waterfowl hunting hot spot, much of Mike's enforcement related to waterfowl hunting occurs on the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway. And when duty called, he also has made strong cases when assisting on enforcement cases along the Mississippi River.

Warden Mike Nice is an outstanding field warden who has built a well-rounded and effective waterfowl program in his area, and is thus deserving of this award.



Waterfowl Officer of the Year, Mike Nice, with Dick Koerner, Chair of the WCC Migratory Committee

DO YOU KNOW AN ORGANIZATION OR INDIVIDUAL THAT SHOULD BE RECOGNIZED?

Each year the Conservation Congress seeks nominations for Statewide Conservation Organization of the Year, Local Conservation Organization of the Year and Educator of the Year.

If you know of a statewide or local conservation organization or individual dedicated to educating others on conservation matters, please consider nominating them for one of the Conservation Congress's annual awards.

Visit the WCC website at dnr.wi.gov for application and nomination forms.