



North Carolina Coastal Federation

Working Together for a Healthy Coast

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Hofmann Forest Heroes and Crystal Coast Residents Among Recipients of North Carolina Coastal Federation 2015 Pelican Awards

Ocean- The winners of the North Carolina Coastal Federation's annual Pelican Awards have been announced. The awards recognize exemplary work of people, organizations and groups to protect and enhance the N.C. coast. The awards were presented today at the North Carolina History Center in New Bern.

Among the winners are Ronald Sutherland of Durham and Fred Cubbage of Raleigh, who together led a grassroots campaign that secured the preservation of the Hofmann Forest in Jones and Onslow counties.

In 2013, when North Carolina State University announced plans to sell its 79,000-acre research forest to an agribusiness in Indiana, Sutherland, a conservation scientist for the Wildlands Network and Cubbage, a forestry professor at NCSU stepped in and lead a two-year fight to save the Hofmann. As the main plaintiffs in a lawsuit, they contended that the forest was state land subject to a mandated review of the sale's potential environmental effect.

The state Supreme Court had accepted the case when NCSU announced earlier this year that the Hofmann Forest was no longer for sale. In one of the greatest conservation victories in state history, the university set in motion a plan that will allow the preservation of most of the Hofmann as forested land.

Swansboro resident, Paul Donnelly, the Superintendent of Hammocks Beach State Park, was honored by the federation for helping the organization carry out its mission of coastal habitat restoration and education for over 10 years.

Throughout the years, Donnelly has gone well beyond his administration role as park superintendent, getting his hands dirty and his feet wet working with the federation. He has helped to build oyster shell bag sills, planted thousands of marsh grass plugs to restore eroding shorelines and transported hundreds of volunteers and school children by boat for environmental education programs on Jones Island. Donnelly is due to retire from Hammocks Beach State Park, but the federation will always remember his work ethic, partnership and contributions to the N.C. coast.

JoAnne Powell of Gloucester received her Pelican Award for extraordinary volunteer contributions to the federation's education programs and her commitment to advancing the field of environmental education.

As a member of the federation's central region Advisory Committee, Powell has taken the lead as an environmental educator aboard the federation's birding cruises each spring and fall. She previously worked at the North Carolina Maritime Museum as the Education Curator and possesses a wealth of knowledge on coastal history and wildlife. Her dedication as an environmental education volunteer inspires those who participate in her programs to become advocates for coastal issues. Her commitment to teach others about our beautiful coast has been a positive reflection on the federation and the work that it does.

A Lifetime Achievement award was presented to Patti Fowler of the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries for her 33-year career and dedication to the preservation of our coast.

A true champion of the coast, Patti has nurtured and cultivated a proactive atmosphere within her agency that put the welfare of the people and coastal resources she serves as her first priority. She worked her way through the ranks and will soon be retiring as Chief of the Shellfish Sanitation and Recreational Water Quality Section for the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries.

For decades, Patti overcame political and fiscal obstacles that threatened to compromise public health. She made sure that we can still eat shellfish or swim in North Carolina without worrying about getting sick. For decades, Patti has been on the leading edge of efforts to protect and restore coastal water quality. She made sure that we had both the data and knowledge to keep our coastal waters clean. Her inspired leadership is infectious, and that means that her agency will continue her legacy after she retires later this year.

"Next time you take a dip at the shore or eat an oyster thank Patti Fowler for her years of public service. She's worked tirelessly to keep our coastal waters a safe place to fish and swim," added Miller.

Other organization-wide honorees include Jim and Bonnie Swartzenberg of Jacksonville. The couple was lauded for their tireless commitment to protecting and restoring coastal water quality and vital oyster habitats of the coast. As previous owners of J & B Aquafood, the Swartzenbergs' livelihood depended on

clean water and a healthy estuary. Together, they have been unwavering advocates for protecting water quality and restoring habitats along the coast for years.

The Swartzenbergs have fought for tougher stormwater regulations, gone to court to champion shellfish waters, served on numerous commissions and advisory committees, and helped usher in the birth of oyster aquaculture in North Carolina. Their deep connection to the coast, combined with good humor and a willingness to help facilitate change makes them valued members of the federation family.

The federation's Executive Director, Todd Miller commented that "this year's central coast Pelican Award winners embody the dedication and commitment of our partners and volunteers, it is through their efforts that we can succeed at our mission to ensure that the N.C.'s coast remains a beautiful and productive place for future generations."

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About the North Carolina Coastal Federation:

The North Carolina Coastal Federation is the state's only non-profit organization focused exclusively on protecting and restoring the coast of North Carolina through education, advocacy and habitat restoration and preservation. The federation's headquarters are at 3609 N.C. 24 in Ocean between Morehead City and Swansboro and the office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The federation also operates field offices in Wrightsville Beach and Manteo. For more information call 252.393.8185 or check our website at www.nccoast.org.

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