

PA Environmental Digest Article

Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Professionals 2006 Karl Mason Awards

On Thursday, May 18, 2006, during the Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Professionals (PAEP) Annual Conference in State College, the association presented its 2006 Karl Mason Awards to John Dawes, an Angus cattle farmer and conservationist from Huntington County and the DCNR Wild Resource Conservation Program.

Karl Mason

Karl Mason served as Pennsylvania's first State Environmental Administrator from 1952 to 1966. Karl's holistic vision of environmental management set the pattern for the state that embraces all essential elements of the problems of air, water and land related waste disposal and community environmental protection. The general framework established by Karl serves as the foundation for Pennsylvania's environmental protection programs to this day. Karl believed and put into practice the notion that environmental protection is primarily the business of professionals who have the skills by virtue of their scientific training to manage the technical and scientific complexities of maintaining a safe, healthy and clean environment. He was committed to the belief that continuing education was an essential part of the career of every environmental professional.

John Dawes

PAEP recognized John Dawes as an individual who exemplifies the vision of Karl Mason that environmental protection and enhancement starts with committed environmental professionals who understand the complexities of Mother Nature, who embrace a positive environmental ethic, and who through a life long commitment to get things done. John fulfills his environmental ethic both in the organizations he supports and leads and in the wise management of his farm in Huntington County. Among his many professional accomplishments are:

- He established the Western Pa Watershed Program, an arm of the Heinz Endowments, with a mission of protecting, preserving, and restoring the Commonwealth's water resources.
- He administers the Western PA Watershed Grant Program, which fosters local environmental groups at the grassroots level to organize and carry out site-specific remediation projects. The \$3 million dollars in project funding granted by the program has leveraged over \$26 million dollars in matching funds.
- He has been active in local, state, and national level conservation efforts and served on the Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future, the Governor's 21st Century Environment Commission, the Pennsylvania Angus Association, the Juniata Clean Water Partnership, the Penn State Center for Watershed Stewardship, and Preservation Pennsylvania.

- He has been active in conservation farming using practices such as rotational grazing, stream bank fencing, riparian buffer enhancement, enhanced cattle crossings, converting pastures back to wetlands, and wind power generation.

Wild Resource Conservation Program

PAEP recognized the DCNR Wild Resource Conservation Program as a statewide program that strongly supports research and protection efforts for the states natural heritage through it educational and grant programs. In partnership with agencies, organizations and concerned citizens, the program strives to maintain, manage, enhance and restore Pennsylvania's native wild plants and non-game animals and their habitats.

The program's current Executive Director, Sara Nicholas, and former Executive Director, Frank Felbaum, were recognized for the program's valuable contributions.

The grant monies provided by the Wild Resource Conservation Fund enables the Wild Resource Conservation Program to produce a wide variety of environmental education materials, such as posters, activity books, Keystone Wild Notes (a free quarterly newsletter) and videos. The educational materials used by many of the state's conservation agencies, the Department of Education, and private groups were developed to educate the general public about species and habitat issues.

The Wild Resource Conservation Fund and the Environmental Stewardship Fund provide dollars for applied research projects (Pa. native wild plants, mosses, fungi, land snails, grasshoppers, butterflies, non-game fish, amphibians, reptiles, aquatic organisms, non-game birds and mammals). These projects collect valuable information and promote active recovery of the Commonwealth's wild plant and animal resources.

PAEP/PHMC Conservation Heritage Program

The Karl Mason Awards program is administered by the PAEP Conservation Heritage Committee as part of its Conservation Heritage Program. In collaboration with PAEP, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission is producing an array of projects over the next several years to increase conservation heritage awareness in the Commonwealth. For example, the PAEP and the Karl Mason Family jointly funded the Karl Mason Conservation Project, which includes research into the life and work of the late Karl Mason, regarded as the Commonwealth's first environmental administrator. This research provides a pilot project for developing a template for including some of the state's many conservation leaders in future exhibits, web sites, and public symposia.

During the Karl Mason Award ceremony dinner, Dr. Vagel Keller of Carnegie Mellon University highlighted his findings from researching Karl Mason's history. The findings will be published in the next issue of the PA Heritage Magazine.

As a special treat for the award ceremony participants, Walter Lyon, one of Karl Mason's employees, and Walter's wife Ann were present. Barbara Franco, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, and Beth Hager, PHMC Development Officer, were on hand to welcome the conference attendees to the Karl Mason Award dinner and talk about the PA Conservation Heritage Program.

For more information about PAEP, Conservation Heritage, and Karl Mason visit the PAEP website at www.paep.org. If you are interested in assisting in promoting research and dissemination of information about the Commonwealth's rich conservation heritage, you can contact, Wayne Kober, Chair of the PAEP Conservation Heritage Committee at wwkpa@earthlink.net.