

CONTACT:

Jane Vachon: (603) 271-5619
Jon Charpentier: (603) 271-3211
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MEDIA: Print-quality images of the award winners are available for download at http://www.wildnh.com/Newsroom/2014/Q2/commission_awards.html

Five Earn New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission Awards of Excellence

CONCORD, N.H. – At its April meeting, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission honored five individuals with Awards of Excellence for outstanding efforts in the conservation field in support of the N.H. Fish and Game Department’s mission.

"The people we are honoring have all made a significant contribution to the mission of New Hampshire’s wildlife agency, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department," said Robert S.S. Blake, Fish and Game Commissioner for Strafford County and chair of the Commission's awards program.

The 2013 Commission Award of Excellence (presented in 2014) were as follows:

Lemay and Sons Beef of Goffstown, N.H., was honored with the Commission’s **Volunteer Award of Excellence**. For the past 18 years, Lemay and Sons has processed 20 to 30 deer, free of charge, for the New Hampshire Food Bank – more than 450 deer since 1996.

“Lemay and Sons have never sought recognition for their good deeds, but through their generosity, some 32 thousand pounds of venison has been provided for the less fortunate,” said Commissioner Blake. “This has been a great social good, but also has served to cast a positive light on hunting and hunters.”

Koby Van Beest of Canaan, N.H. earned the **Landowner Appreciation Award**, which recognizes excellence in the preservation or enhancement of opportunities for public use on private property.

Van Beest and his wife own 80 acres in Canaan, which they do not post, leaving it open for hunting, hiking and snowshoe trails. His fields are kept open the old-fashioned way – by allowing local people to pasture their cattle, which benefits a wide variety of wildlife. He actively encourages youth to get involved in outdoor activities; for example, he started the Outing Club at Mascoma High School, where he teaches.

“Koby’s actions are a fine example of the good things that can happen when people with a broad range of interest and appreciation for the outdoor world work together,” said Commissioner Blake. “It’s also worth noting that you don’t have to be a large landowner to make a difference for wildlife and outdoor recreation in this state.”

There were two winners this year in the category of **Communications Award of Excellence**.

The first honoree for the Commission's **Communications Award of Excellence** was **Paula Tracy of Rumney**, the editor of WMUR-TV's "Escape Outside" program and website. Through these media, she showcases opportunities for outdoor recreation to a statewide audience. Tracy has written about the outdoors and conservation in New Hampshire for more than 25 years, including her work as a reporter for the Union Leader.

"Now that Paula has branched out into the world of television, she is bringing stories about outdoor recreation and conservation to a mainstream audience in the Granite State," said Commissioner Blake. "She often looks to the Fish and Game Department for story ideas and content. Thanks, Paula, for all you are doing to get people outside!"

Watch for Paula Tracy's "Escape Outside" segment at 5:40 p.m. on Wednesdays on WMUR-TV.

Outdoor writer **Jeff Batula of Concord** was also honored with a Commission **Communication Award of Excellence**. Batula has been a monthly contributor to *Hawkeye Hunting & Fishing News* for many years.

"Jeff shares his passion for hunting and fishing through his writing, capturing the essence of what is special about the New Hampshire outdoor experience," said Commissioner Blake. "Many *Hawkeye* readers have been inspired by his adventures."

One of those readers was *Hawkeye* publisher Bill Balam, who nominated Batula for the award. In his nomination letter, Balam noted that knowledge gained from Batula's columns has helped him put a deer or two on the wall! "In the 20-plus years I have been working on *Hawkeye*, there has not been a writer who generated more positive feedback from New Hampshire sportsmen than Jeff," Balam wrote.

"That's high praise, and well deserved," concurred Blake. "We are delighted to recognize Jeff today with the Fish and Game Commission Communication Award of Excellence."

The Commission's highest honor is the **Ellis R. Hatch Junior Award of Excellence**. Former Commissioner Ellis Hatch was the first recipient of this award, which now bears his name. This year, the Ellis Hatch Award was given posthumously to **Joseph Conklin of Canterbury, N.H.**, a tireless advocate for trout fishing, trout habitat and fisheries education. Conklin passed away in November of 2013, soon after completing a woody habitat restoration project on a stream in Conway.

Just about every Fish and Game biologist knew Conklin, often as an eager volunteer working at their side. Conklin volunteered extensively on stream assessments, electro

fishing and habitat restoration projects throughout the state with the Inland Fisheries Division. He also helped organize fish counting volunteers for the coastal fish ladders with the Marine Fisheries Division. After young-of-the-year brook trout were found in Thompson Brook, a tributary of the Winnicut River in Greenland, he soon organized a restoration project partnering with Trout Unlimited and Fish and Game.

In his nomination letter, Fish Habitat Biologist John Magee expressed his deep appreciation for Conklin: “In my twenty years of professional experience, I have worked with many organizations, volunteers and professionals, all passionate about fisheries. Joe’s passion, dedication and outright energy surpassed that of all others,” Magee wrote.

As he presented the award to members of Conklin’s family, Commissioner Blake also reflected on the significant contributions Conklin had made as a Department volunteer and fisheries educator and enthusiast: “Joe shared his experiences and knowledge of fisheries with many people. Even those who did not hunt and fish soon became advocates of fish, fishing and the Department. This is the true goal of all our work – to educate and motivate others. That is exactly what Joe did, and he did it extremely well, as a stalwart volunteer for Fish and Game.”

There are seven award categories for New Hampshire Fish and Game Commission Awards of Excellence. Nominations are accepted each year, and must be submitted by December 31. Please consider nominating a worthy individual or organization for this year's awards! For a description of the various award categories and a nomination form, visit http://www.wildnh.com/Inside_FandG/commission_awards.html.