

## **“Jim Stevenson Resource Manager of the Year” 2010 Awards are Announced!**

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Hundreds of professional land managers are stewards of the large inventory of public conservation and recreation lands in the State of Florida. The Jim Stevenson Resource Manager of the Year Award was established by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and is given annually by proclamation of the Governor and Cabinet to recognize a superior land manager from each of the three major agencies that manage these public lands. The award is named for James A. Stevenson, who contributed tireless leadership in ecosystem management, prescribed burning, exotic plant control, and springs protection during his long career with DEP's Florida Park Service and Division of State Lands.

The three traditional award winners were joined in 2010 by a special award to Lee Edmiston, Director of DEP's Office of Coastal and Aquatic Managed Areas. Lee has a long and distinguished career with CAMA, but last year excelled as DEP's lead on assessing the damage caused by the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, and for planning and implementing the restoration of Florida's damaged resources. The nomination also noted Lee's influential role in protecting the flow of the Apalachicola River to the bay in the Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint (ACF) Basin dispute. In both these endeavors, Lee showed a rare ability to combine the roles of scientist and government representative, while also earning the respect of local governments and the local seafood industry. As one letter of support wrote, "Lee is the kind of face government should have!"

### **From the Department of Environmental Protection:**

Jason DePue is the lead biologist in District 3 of the Florida Park Service, assisting 29 individual state parks in the east-central region of the state. Staffs from several parks participated in his nomination.

At Blue Spring State Park Jason participated on many burns; he added OPS staff, upped the targeted acres, and secured contract funding for exotic plant control; he arranged for USDA to remove more feral hogs; he administered grants and partnered resources with local government for scrub restoration and pitched in on scrub-jay banding and monitoring; he facilitated off-site hardwood cuts; he secured funding for firebreak and perimeter fencing; and he contributed his own GIS expertise to the park.

Staff from Sebastian Inlet, Indian River Lagoon Preserve, and Dunn's Creek state parks, testified to similar assistance from Jason, but also added that he works alongside the park staff on resource management projects and has a gift for inspiring the team to achieve excellence. Staff also wrote that when a park's own burn boss was out of action, Jason worked with the staff to learn the art of beach burning and showed that he was as good a student as he was a teacher.

Jason was also integral to major salt marsh restoration projects at North Peninsula State Park and Gamble Rogers Memorial State Recreation Area at Flagler Beach, which included spoil removal, leveling and grading, tidal creek restoration, and replanting. As in all his projects, Jason worked closely with many agency partners and had great success securing grant funding. Jason helped with the big grant of \$1.6 million from NOAA to restore the marsh spoil islands, which was matched by SJRWMD.

Jason also worked closely with faculty of the University of South Florida in several state parks to develop innovative site-level GIS models to find locations with archaeological potential, to research historical maps, aeriels, and archives to find sites, and to develop management strategies for them.



**Jason DePue, Florida Park Service biologist enjoying a state park burn.**

**From the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry (DOF):**

Winnie Schreiber has been the Manager of the Division of Forestry's Withlacoochee Forestry Center (WFC) for 12 years and is responsible for the Withlacoochee and Seminole state forests, totaling 184,543 acres and 130 staff. After her appointment, Winnie initiated a new organizational process between the recreation, resource, and maintenance and operations sections at WFC, resulting in improved staff interaction, cross-training, and sharing of expertise. She also provided new emphasis to the threatened and endangered species program, most notably to the red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW). This past fiscal year, WSF burned over 40,800 acres - over 3 times the previous four-year average. The results of the management emphasis are obvious - WSF has provided founder RCWs to Camp Blanding, St. Marks NWR, St. Sebastian River Preserve State Park, Corbett Wildlife Management Area, and Picayune Strand State Forest. Winnie has also increased the use of GIS to track invasive exotic plant populations and treatment, and has secured exotics funding from the National Wild Turkey Federation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, DEP, FWC, and federal sources.

Winnie also focused on recreation and guided the upgrading of roads and camping sites for modern recreation vehicles. There are currently 11 public day-use areas, 251 camping sites (172 full-service), 669 hunt camp sites in 13 hunt camp areas, and over 250 miles of trails under her management. She also improved campsites, restrooms, roads, and trails in the 2,600-acre Croom Motorcycle Area, added an all-terrain vehicle for medical transport, and dedicated an area to youth riding and training.

Winnie is also in high finance! Withlacoochee and Seminole state forests bring in between \$450,000 and \$700,000 annually from timber, other products, and leases (pine straw, cattle and apiary leases). Recreation revenue totaled almost \$800,000 in FY 2009-10 for both forests.

In summary, Winnie has excelled in developing a closely knit team of professionals that manage the Withlacoochee Forestry Center for the mutual benefit of the environment and the citizens of Florida.



**Winnie Schreiber, Manager of the Division of Forestry's Withlacoochee Forestry Center.**

#### **From the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC):**

Don Francis is a Fisheries and Wildlife Biological Scientist III who has served as area manager and biologist on the 11,039-acre Joe Budd Wildlife Management Area (Leon County) for over 30 years. Don, with a staff of two fish and wildlife technicians, has implemented an exemplary prescribed burning program that purposefully varies the 2-4 year burning intervals, intensities, and seasonality to create habitat diversity and a mosaic of vegetation patterns. Habitat is also being restored through timber thins and longleaf pine reforestation. Don has also converted improved pasture back to native groundcover for more than 15 years, using his own experimental plots to refine his prescriptions.

Don aggressively controls invasive pest plants and routinely combs the research literature to improve his adaptive management approach. He was FWC's original

representative on the Panhandle Invasive Upland Plant Working Group and has facilitated similar management on other partner conservations lands.

Don's accomplishments also extend to hydrological restoration and a couple of years ago was credited for partnering with the Division of Forestry to replace a blown-out culvert and bulkhead with a Bailey bridge, costing \$15,000 instead of the \$100,000 original design.

Don has been a staunch protector of the rare slope forests on Joe Budd WMA, which contain six state-listed endangered and threatened species. A few years ago, he found a previously unknown population of the trout lily which was only the eighth population documented in the state. Don also discovered the current national champion pyramid magnolia on Joe Budd WMA.

Last, but not least, Don has developed Joe Budd into one of the premier hunting destinations in the state managed by a limited entry quota permit system that promotes a sustainable, high-quality hunting experience. Thanks to Don, Joe Budd is routinely showcased to Legislators, their aides, FWC Commissioners and conservation organizations as **the** example of a well-managed wildlife management area.



**Don Francis, area manager and biologist on Joe Budd Wildlife Management Area, measures "his" national champion pyramid magnolia.**

A hearty congratulation to all four winners of the 2010 Jim Stevenson Resource Manager of the Year Award! You exemplify the skillful stewardship of Florida's exceptional public lands.