

## 2019 George B. Hartzog, Jr. 2019 Environmental Award Recipients

The 2019 awards ceremony and luncheon was held on October 22, 2019 at the Madren Center on Clemson University campus. Please join us in congratulating this year's Hartzog Environmental Award recipients:

- The Benton H. Box Award – Drs. Ryan Sharp and Steve Trombulak
- The Walter T. Cox Award – David Vela
- The Dwight A. Holder Award – Dr. Jennifer Thomsen
- The William C. Everhart Award – Dr. Carolyn Ward
- The Fran P. Mainella Award – Chris Lehnertz

### The Benton H. Box Award

The Benton H. Box Award was awarded to **Dr. Ryan L. Sharp**, assistant professor of park management and conservation at Kansas State University, and **Dr. Stephen C. Trombulak**, Professor Emeritus of biology and biosphere studies at Middlebury College for recognition as teachers who by precept and example inspire in students the quest for knowledge and encourage curriculum innovation to inculcate an “environmental ethic” as the rule of conduct.



Dr. Matt Brownlee (left) and members of the Box family with Dr. Sharp's award (Dr. Sharp was unable to attend).



Dr. Trombulak (second from left), members of the Box family, and Dr. Robert Baldwin (right).

The Award is named in appreciation of Dr. Box's distinguished career as an educator/administrator, especially as Dean of the College of Forest and Recreation Resources at Clemson University, which he led to national and international recognition for academic excellence and for leadership in fostering private innovation in resource management. The Award recognizes the teacher who by precept and example inspires in students the quest for knowledge; or the administrator who fosters a learning environment and encourages curriculum innovation to inculcate an “environmental ethic” as the rule of conduct involving resource management, development and utilization; or the private practitioner whose management over a sustained period demonstrates leadership in preserving, enhancing, renewing and restoring a livable environment.

### About Dr. Ryan Sharp

Dr. Ryan Sharp received his PhD in Natural Resources, Recreation and Tourism from the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia. During his time pursuing his degree he was very active in teaching and leading field trips for the school; for this, he was recognized with the Graduate Teaching Assistant of the Year award during his final year. During this time, Dr. Sharp also became active working with the George Wright Society on the Park Break program, which brings a diverse set of graduate students to national parks for a week-long service-based learning experience. He was part of the inaugural group of fellows for the program, where he explored ways to engage communities at Acadia National Park.

Over the next 10 years, Dr. Sharp became a champion for Park Break by promoting and enhancing the program. Specifically, he helped plan, fund, and administer two programs at Great Sand Dunes National Park (one on climate change, the other on social science) and another multi-park program focused on visitor use management at Joshua Tree National Park, Mojave National Preserve, and Death Valley National Park. Dr. Sharp continues to work with the George Wright Society and the Clemson University Institute for Parks to develop and administer this unique opportunity for students.

Dr. Sharp started his professorial career at Eastern Kentucky University, in the Recreation and Park Administration

Department. During his time there he was responsible for teaching four classes a semester, and often voluntarily taught courses during the summer. Through his teaching, he was able to hone his skills and develop engaging ways to get his students out into the field. From weekend backpacking trips focused on Leave No Trace Principles, to half-hour drives to local nature centers, Dr. Sharp strived to provide students with hands-on experiences and opportunities to connect with professionals in the field. Dr. Sharp also offered 2-3 week field courses during the summer, taking students to national parks, national forests, and national wildlife reserves from Kentucky to Florida. Dr. Sharp always included a service component in these trips in hopes of instilling in students the value of a servant leader perspective to carry on into their careers. These efforts were rewarded with the College of Health Sciences Teacher of the Year and the Recreation and Park Administration Teacher of the Year awards.

Dr. Sharp is currently an Associate Professor of Park Management and Conservation at Kansas State University, where he continues to provide engaging field experiences that now integrate his extensive research program focused on visitor management issues in national parks. For the last four years, Dr. Sharp has actively engaged undergraduate and graduate students in research in the university's Park Management and Conservation program. Students have participated in projects at Grand Canyon National Park, Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Ozark National Scenic Riverways, and Cumberland Island National Seashore, amongst others. He created an undergraduate research course to ensure that students get credit for their research efforts, and also provide the students an opportunity to actively reflect on the value of these types of experiences. Graduate students also gain valuable experience by leading a team, and managing an often complex and ever-changing project. Dr. Sharp truly enjoys seeing the students' growth through these hands-on, field-based experiences, and hopes that upon their entry into the park and protected area workforce, students can draw upon all that they have learned.

### **About Dr. Steve Trombulak**

Dr. Steve Trombulak is Professor Emeritus of Biology and Environmental Studies at Middlebury College in western Vermont. Prior to joining the faculty there in 1985, he earned his B.A. in Biology at UCLA (1977) and his Ph.D. in Zoology at the University of Washington in Seattle (1983). From 1983 to 1985, he split his time between Stanford University, where he was a post-doctoral research associate in the Department of Biological Sciences, and the University of Washington, where he was an instructor in Zoology, Biology, and the Institute for Environmental Studies.

He began his research career focusing on population and community ecology, including studies on elevational distributions of pinyon pines in the Mohave Desert, territorial behavior of hummingbirds in the tropical dry forests of Costa Rica, thermoregulation of desert-dwelling beetles in the Great Basin Desert, competition between montane chipmunks in the Cascade Mountains of the Pacific Northwest, and phenotypic plasticity in life-history strategies of montane ground squirrels in both the Cascade and Sierra Nevada Mountains.

At Middlebury College, he developed a diverse and highly-successful teaching program in conservation biology, vertebrate natural history, and environmental science. His research program also expanded beyond ecology to embrace both conservation biology – with an emphasis on protected areas, conservation planning, and wildlands – and science pedagogy. He retired from the faculty in June after 34 years, during which time he served variously as chair of the Biology Department, Director of the Environmental Studies Program, founding director of the Middlebury School of the Environment, and Director of Sciences. He also served on the Board of Governors of the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) from 1996 to 2006, as a member-at-large, chair of the SCB Education Committee, and president of the North American regional section. He also recently completed a term as Vice-President for Education and Chapters of SCB's North American section. He was also a founding board member of the Natural History Network and continues as the editor of the Journal of Natural History Education and Experience, now a publication of the Natural History Institute.

Dr. Trombulak is the author of 47 journal articles, 22 book chapters, and five books, including Landscape-scale Conservation Planning (2010) with Clemson University professor Robert Baldwin. These publications include "Principles of Conservation Biology: Recommended Guidelines for Conservation Literacy" (2004, Conservation Biology), which remains the seminal framework for the development for conservation curricula at colleges and universities.

He and his wife, Josselyne Price, who is an ethnomusicologist specializing in the music of West Africa and the regions of the African Diaspora, currently divide their time between the Champlain Valley in western Vermont and west coast of Puerto Rico.

## The William C. Everhart Award

The William C. Everhart Award was presented to **Carolyn Ward** for recognition of sustained achievements that illuminate, provide creative insights, and that foster an appreciation of our natural and cultural heritage.



Dr. Carolyn Ward with Dr. Bob Powell.

The Award is named in appreciation of the distinguished career of Bill Everhart as field interpreter, researcher, administrator, author, and creator of the National Park Service's Harpers Ferry Center for creative design and communication, which has received national and international recognition for excellence.

The Award recognizes sustained achievements during a career or in a specific episode that illuminate, provide creative insights to, and that foster an appreciation of our natural and cultural heritage.

### About Dr. Carolyn Ward

Dr. Carolyn Ward's distinguished career has spanned three decades from field interpreter at Hungry Mother State Park to CEO of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation. She was born in the Blue Ridge Mountains in Southwestern Virginia, graduated from Emory and Henry College, and received her Master's degree and Ph.D. from Virginia Tech in Forestry. She is a decorated professor and award-winning researcher and author whose life's work has been dedicated to building bridges and making connections. As a professor at Humboldt State University, Ward grew a modern and comprehensive interpretive program and conducted field research across the country. Her influence on parks and public lands will be felt for decades through her students, research, and leadership as Editor of the Journal of Interpretation Research for 16 years. While at Humboldt, she was recognized as the Outstanding Professor of the Year and found time to co-author, *Conducting Meaningful Interpretation: A Field Guide to Success*.

In 2009, she launched the Kids in Parks program in partnership with the Blue Ridge Parkway and Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation. This world-class collaboration unites National Park Service, state parks, community groups, the Eastern Band of Cherokee, and nonprofit organizations around the goal of getting more kids moving outdoors and connected to public lands. The Kids in Parks program now features 200 trails in 12 states and has facilitated over one million adventures for kids and families. In recognition of her transformative leadership, Ward is a 2012 recipient of the White House Champion of Change award.

Ward now serves as the CEO of the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation, the primary philanthropic partner to the Blue Ridge Parkway. She has dedicated the later part of her career to forming partnerships and building connections and capacity in all that she does for the Blue Ridge Parkway and the communities that dot its ridges. With more visitors than Yellowstone, Yosemite, and the Grand Canyon combined, the Blue Ridge Parkway is one of the most visited units of the National Park Service. It receives a fraction of the budget of any one of those parks. Ward's leadership at the Blue Ridge Parkway Foundation is critical to helping bridge the gap between the needs of the park and funding provided. The Foundation has provided over \$14 million to support programs and projects and under Ward's leadership continues to help preserve and protect the Blue Ridge Parkway.

## The Walter T. Cox Award

The Walter T. Cox Award was awarded to **the Honorable David Vela** for sustained achievement in public service providing leadership in administration of public lands and for policy formation affecting our natural and cultural resources.



David Vela with Dean Emeritus Brett Wright and former National Park Service Director Fran Mainella.

The Award is so named in appreciation of Dr. Cox's distinguished career in education and public service, especially his tenure as President of Clemson University and as the Director of the Santee-Cooper Authority.

The Award recognizes sustained achievement in public service on the firing line, where the public interest meets the private interest in public policy formulation and administration; distinguished leadership and support of innovation in conflict resolution of policy initiatives that enhance the quality of life; personal achievements during a career or in a specific episode that provides inspiration and leadership to others in serving the above purposes.

## About David Vela

On September 30, 2019, the Honorable David Vela, a 29-year career veteran of the National Park Service (NPS), was named Deputy Director exercising the authority of the Director of the National Park Service. He had been serving as Deputy Director of Operations since April. Vela previously served as superintendent of Grand Teton National Park and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway from March 2014 to April 2019. Vela managed more than 310,000 acres of park lands, including the spectacular Teton Range that serves as home to iconic wildlife from bison to grizzly bears, as well as 51 miles of the wild and scenic Snake River.

Prior to assuming his Grand Teton post, Vela served as associate director for Workforce, Relevancy and Inclusion in the NPS Washington headquarters where he administered a \$32 million dollar operational budget with 153 employees, and served as a key advisor to the NPS Director and Deputy Director on the full spectrum of strategic Human Capital Management issues, initiatives, and policies. His national program areas included: Human Resources, Learning and Development, Equal Opportunity, Youth, and the Office of Relevancy, Diversity & Inclusion.

Before his time in Washington, Vela served for over four years as director of the NPS Southeast Region, where he oversaw 66 national park sites in nine states, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. Vela administered multi-million dollar projects, including an operational budget in excess of \$230 million dollars. In addition, he provided product and leadership support for the Department/NPS National Latino Heritage Initiative, served as Co-Chair for the NPS Civil War 150th Commemoration National Steering Committee, and served on the NPS Development Advisory Board and NPS National Leadership Council Executive Committee.

Vela began his NPS career in 1981 as a cooperative education student at San Antonio Missions National Historical Park in Texas, and later became a permanent park ranger. From 1987 to 1998, Vela worked in a variety of federal posts outside the NPS. He was a special agent in the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Inspector General's Office, conducting white-collar criminal investigations in New York and New Jersey. He was also a special assistant for Hispanic affairs to the late U.S. Rep. George Thomas "Mickey" Leland of Texas. He was a federal investigator for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. In 1996, the Texas Attorney General appointed Vela director of the Texas Child Support Program, where he supervised more than 70 field offices and 2,400 employees.

Upon his return to the National Park Service, Vela held park superintendent positions at Palo Alto Battlefield National Historic Site (Texas), Lyndon B. Johnson National Historical Park (Texas), and the George Washington Memorial Parkway (Washington, DC and VA/MD Area).

Vela is a graduate of Texas A&M University, with a Bachelor of Science degree in recreation and parks. He graduated from the U.S. Department of the Interior Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program in May 2006. Vela is the recipient of numerous awards both within and outside of the National Park Service for leadership and performance excellence. He and his wife, Melissa, have two children, Christina and Anthony, and six grandchildren.

## The Dwight A. Holder Award

The Dwight A. Holder Award was awarded to **Dr. Jennifer Thomsen**, for outstanding work and sustained achievement that foster understanding, wise use, and conservation of natural and cultural resources.



Dr. Jennifer Thomsen with Dr. Wayne Freimund.

The Award is named in honor of Mr. Holder's illustrious career as an entrepreneur and public servant. As Chairman of the South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission he led South Carolina's parks into a new era of service to the people of South Carolina and the nation.

The Award recognizes outstanding work by doctoral candidates in the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management; a member of the Department faculty for original research, scholarly writing, and innovative and inspired teaching; the faculty adviser and graduate student as a team, for initiatives that foster understanding of and provide new insights into the promotion, management, wise use and enjoyment of South Carolina's natural and cultural heritage in perpetuity; and distinguished academic leadership by a member of the Department faculty. (Mr. Holder passed away in Spring 2006).

### About Dr. Jennifer Thomsen

Dr. Jennifer Thomsen graduated with her M.S. in Wildlife Biology from Clemson University in 2007 with a focus on investigating mercury concentrations in bald eagle populations in the Great Lakes region. She then transitioned to working as an environmental educator at the South Carolina Aquarium and engaging with the public and school groups on conservation topics. She returned to graduate school at Clemson University to earn her Ph.D. focusing on Parks and Conservation Area Management to expand her expertise to the human dimensions of conservation. Dr. Thomsen's dissertation focused on transboundary ecosystem engagement and stakeholder collaboration with case studies in the Southern Appalachians and the Northern Rocky Mountain ecosystems.

After graduation in 2014, Dr. Thomsen worked as a post-doc with the Woods Institute of the Environment at Stanford University on a project focused on environmental learning in the San Francisco Bay area. In 2015, she started working at the University of Montana as an Assistant Professor of Parks, Tourism, and Recreation Management. Bridging her natural science background in wildlife biology with her social science background in parks and conservation area management, Dr. Thomsen's research largely focuses on stakeholder collaboration associated with large landscape conservation, sustainable tourism, and protected area management. Her work has involved partnerships with the Center for Large Landscape Conservation and the IUCN Connectivity and Transboundary Specialist groups to conduct surveys addressing the challenges, opportunities, and outcomes associated with stakeholder collaboration and how these groups evolve over time in their transboundary ecosystem management. She also helped in the facilitation and planning of the Hands Across Borders Transboundary Workshop and the National Forum on Landscape Conservation. Additionally, she has been heavily involved with UNESCO's biosphere reserve network and serves on the National MAB Committee.

Dr. Thomsen's work in sustainable tourism and protected area management focuses on the management of resources that balances the environmental, social/cultural, and economic needs of diverse stakeholders. Her research explores unique types of tourism, such as voluntourism in Peru and Haiti, whitewater ecotourism in Bhutan, and safari hunting tourism in Botswana. She has worked extensively with the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service in a variety of projects, including visitor management in Glacier National Park, transboundary trail and wildlife management for thru-hikers, international visitor management in Yellowstone National Park, and river monitoring and management of the Flathead Wild and Scenic River.

Dr. Thomsen works with the U.S. Forest Service International programs to support capacity building of protected area managers in Brazil. She is also part of the INSAKA collaborative group that brings together partners of African universities to address social-ecological issues. Additionally, she serves on the George Wright Society's Board of Directors, the Missoula County Parks and Trails Advisory Board, and the International Journal of Wilderness Editorial Board. In addition to her scholarly activities, Dr. Thomsen is passionate about her teaching and field experiences for students. She teaches a senior-level capstone course focused on students engaging with professionals and addressing real issues faced by professionals in the field through a semester-long project. She also leads a study abroad course to Zambia and Botswana for undergraduate and graduate students. She was honored by the Division of Student Affairs for her efforts in starting the Northern Rockies Outdoor Leadership Certificate and is involved in numerous campus and college committees including the Chair of the Student Retention Committee. Lastly, she serves as a Big Sister mentor in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program for the past several years. Dr. Thomsen is extremely passionate about her work and engaging the next generation of conservation and protected area leaders.

## The Fran P. Mainella Award

The 2019 Fran P. Mainella Award was awarded to **Chris S. Lehnertz** for sustained and innovative achievement by a woman in the management of North America's natural, historic, or cultural heritage.



Chris Lehnertz with Fran Mainella.

The Award is named in appreciation of the dynamic career of Fran P. Mainella as the first woman Director of the National Park Service.

As Director, she focused some of her many efforts on creating systems of connected parks and developing innovative partnerships to expand services. Director Mainella was previously the Director of the Florida State Park Service and the Executive Director of the Florida Recreation and Park Association.

The Award recognizes sustained and innovative achievement by a woman in the management of North America's natural, historic or cultural heritage.

## About Ms. Chris Lehnertz

Chris Lehnertz is President & CEO of the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy. She has extensive experience managing some of America's most iconic national parks and a passion for making parks relevant, accessible, inclusive, and welcoming for all. The Parks Conservancy is the primary nonprofit partner of the National Park Service (NPS) at the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA). The GGNRA spans nearly 84,000 acres, preserves nationally significant cultural sites such as Alcatraz and Fort Point, and is part of the UNESCO Golden Gate Biosphere reserve that includes vital marine, coastal, and upland resources at Muir Woods, Crissy Field, and the Marin Headlands.

Lehnertz was the regional director for the Pacific West Region and served as superintendent at both Grand Canyon National Park and at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. She started her park career as deputy superintendent at Yellowstone National Park. Before her work with the NPS, she fulfilled her passion for protecting the natural world in posts at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife.

With the NPS, Lehnertz successfully led several complex and challenging projects and issues, including dam removal on the Elwha River in Olympic National Park, international exhibits of art in the parks, and integrating the stewardship of natural and cultural resources during development of the California Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan. She was deeply involved in multiple strategic planning efforts, many of which have resulted in crucial park accomplishments like the addition of lands to Joshua Tree National Park, policy on the Revisiting Leopold Report (2012) for resource stewardship in the 21st century, a modern and sustainable design for a new transcanon waterline at Grand Canyon National Park, and plans for an Inter-tribal cultural site at Desert View in Grand Canyon.

Lehnertz was thrilled to be involved in the addition of four new units to the national park system: César E. Chávez National Monument, Honouliuli National Monument, Tule Springs Fossil Beds National Monument, and the Manhattan Project National Historical Park.

Throughout her career, in every assignment, she has worked to establish a people-first culture. Safety, health, and wellness have been most important — she served five years on the NPS Safety Leadership Council resulting in a new national system of safety designed to improve safety, health, and wellness in every park unit and for every NPS program. She devoted her final NPS assignment to working with colleagues at Grand Canyon National Park on recovery from the trauma of decades of sexual harassment and a hostile work environment, by establishing a culture of respect and inclusion where people could be safe, feel secure, and find support.

Building on her NPS experience, Lehnertz arrived at the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy in April 2019 with an eye toward the future. With 36 percent of national parks now in urban areas, she is committed to advancing the role of national parks in serving civic needs such as education and literacy, wellness, and urban quality of life. She hopes to build on the work being done by the Parks Conservancy and its partners to ensure "Parks For All, Forever!"

## **The Robert G. Stanton Award**

The Award is named in appreciation of the remarkable career of Robert Stanton as the first African-American Director of the National Park Service. Among the many accomplishments of Director Stanton was expansion of the interpretation of diverse cultural meanings inherent in National Parks and increased participation by racial and ethnic minorities as both visitors and employees. The Award recognizes sustained and innovative achievement in promoting racial or ethnic diversity in the management of North America's natural, historic and cultural heritage

Awarded in Alternate Years