

## **Secretary's Partners in Conservation Award**

**INTRODUCTION.** The Department of the Interior engages in partnerships to encourage conservation efforts, to preserve natural and cultural resources, to bring innovative approaches to land and water management, to develop energy resources, to grow the next generation of conservation stewards and, in general, to leverage other resources to accomplish its mission. Through partnerships, we achieve community- and landscape-level conservation results across America, tapping the knowledge and innovation of local people and organizations. To work cooperatively with others, we recognize that our employees must be skilled in collaborative practices and have the organizational support necessary to be highly effective. This award allows the Secretary to recognize excellence in conservation both through external partnerships and through intradepartmental coordination across program lines.

**PURPOSE.** The Secretary's Partners in Conservation Award was established to recognize those who make exceptional contributions in achieving conservation goals through collaboration and partnerships. Overall, this award recognizes outstanding conservation results produced either 1) through the engagement and contributions of external partners, or 2) through significant efforts to foster a collaborative and partnering culture within and across Departmental organizations. Beyond conservation results or increased partnering capacity, these achievements have been realized through the outstanding participation of many diverse individuals and organizations.

**ELIGIBILITY.** All Department of the Interior employees, groups or teams of employees at any grade level, contractors, individuals, citizen groups, youth, private sector entities, non-governmental organizations, and Federal, State, local and tribal governments are eligible to receive this award. The award may be given to any combination of entities that meet the award criteria. Projects or activities must be nominated within one year of accomplishments or completion.

**AWARD.** This award consists of a certificate signed and presented by the Secretary and a citation outlining the accomplishments.

**CATEGORIES.** There are two categories for the Partners in Conservation Award: external and internal. The external award recognizes partnerships in which success involves Departmental employees engaging external individuals, citizen groups, youth, private sector, non-governmental organizations, communities, and Federal, State, local and/or tribal governments in conservation projects. The internal Partners in Conservation Award recognizes excellence within the Department to foster an organizational culture that supports collaboration and partnerships through employee development or through coordination of priority conservation efforts across Departmental, bureau, program or organizational lines.

**CRITERIA.** The criteria for the external and internal Partners in Conservation Award categories are included below. Nominations in each category must address both criteria 1 and 2.

## **External Category**

### **1. Conservation that Furthers the Mission of the Department of the Interior**

Nominations must demonstrate outstanding conservation achievements through partnering in one of the two following areas (A or B).

#### **A) Protecting Natural, Cultural and Heritage Resources**

As the Nation's principal Federal conservation agency, our responsibilities include protection, enhancement and restoration of lands and waters, fish and wildlife, and culture and heritage. Activities may include:

- Improvement in the health of watersheds, landscapes, and marine resources which are Department-managed or influenced;
- Sustaining biological communities on Department-managed and influenced lands and waters; or
- Protecting cultural and natural heritage resources.

#### **B) Sustainably Using Energy, Water and Natural Resources**

Managing the vast resources of America's public lands has been a core Department of the Interior responsibility since it was founded in 1849, but increasingly it is our task to determine where, when, and to what extent renewable and nonrenewable resources on public lands should be developed and made available. We must balance the need for energy, minerals, forage, and forest resources with its protection and recreation mandates. Activities may include:

- Managing or influencing resource use (recreation, education, tourism, energy, minerals, forage, forest resources) to enhance public benefit, promote responsible use, and ensure optimal value;
- Delivering water and/or generating hydropower consistent with applicable Federal and state laws, in an environmentally responsible and cost-efficient manner.

### **2. Partnerships that Demonstrate Best Practices**

Best practices include embracing community-based and landscape-level problem solving through strategies and techniques that promote the development of partnerships with diverse groups, often with widely varied interests, State, local and tribal governments, private for-profit and nonprofit institutions, other non-governmental entities, youth, and other individuals in order to extend conservation beyond Federal lands to a broader landscape. Collaboration involves building and maintaining relationships to find solutions that have broad stakeholder support to achieve conservation goals. Nominations must demonstrate outstanding collaboration as part of the conservation achievements in each of the following areas (A, B and C).

#### **A) Building Relationships**

The partnership must demonstrate skill and initiative in establishing collaborative and constructive relationships, networks, and alliances, in building trust among parties, and in facilitating community-supported decisions to achieve conservation goals. The partnership must model effective ways of cooperating with others to achieve conservation goals and to contribute to the Department's mission in an environmentally sound manner.

**B) Communications**

The partnership must demonstrate vision and excellence in communicating effectively with a broad range of diverse audiences to build the basis for conservation mission accomplishments. The nomination should describe the various means utilized to communicate with partners, other interested groups, the community at large, and Departmental and bureau management.

**C) Strategies and Tools.**

Partnerships may employ a variety of strategies, techniques and tools to achieve conservation goals, including cooperative agreements, grants, memorandum of understanding, conservation easements, land acquisition, challenge cost-share, fund-raising agreements, contracts, etc. Partnerships also may tap resources from a variety of sources. Please discuss the strategies used to accomplish the goals of the external partnership.

**Internal Category****1. Building Capacity for Collaboration and Partnerships**

By ensuring that employees are trained, developed, and have the organizational support to be effective partners, we strive to build capacity for collaboration and partnering. Employees must be capable of partnering externally in on-the-ground conservation efforts and internally to coordinate across program, discipline and administrative boundaries to address priorities and to achieve goals. Nominations must demonstrate outstanding capacity-building achievements in one of the two following areas (A or B).

**A) Training, Employee Development, and Management Practices**

We rely on the competencies and skills of our employees to achieve the Department's mission. Activities may include developing competencies, hiring practices, and managing performance for excellence in collaboration and partnering; training, mentoring, and rewarding to enhance and recognize collaboration and partnering skills; or changing organizational structures to build a culture that values collaboration and recognizes opportunities to partner.

**B) Cross-cutting Planning, Program Delivery and Products**

We encourage and seek to improve interactions among bureau and office programs and disciplines that will lead to better decisions and better on-the-ground program delivery. Activities may include coordinating grant programs, creating inter- and intra-agency partnerships, streamlining agreements or administrative processes, developing joint budget initiatives to support conservation efforts, initiating interagency structured decisionmaking and adaptive management processes, or developing and delivering interagency training programs.

**2. Collaboration to Promote Internal Coordination**

Collaboration embraces effective problem solving through strategies and techniques that promote discussions and informed decisionmaking across agency, program, discipline, and administrative lines to achieve mission results. Nominations must demonstrate outstanding collaboration as part of the capacity building achievements in the following areas (A, B and C).

**A) Building Relationships.**

The internal partnership must demonstrate initiative and competence in working across Departmental, bureau, office, program or discipline lines to coordinate decisionmaking, priorities, investments, and program delivery. The parties must show skill in establishing cooperative and productive relationships, teams, and alliances. These relationships must effectively demonstrate working with others to build collaboration and partnering capacity.

**B) Communications.**

The partnership must demonstrate vision and excellence in communicating effectively with a broad range of diverse audiences within and among Departmental organizations to build the basis for mission accomplishments. The nomination should describe the various means utilized to communicate with partners, other interested groups, employees, and Departmental and bureau management.

**C) Strategies and Tools.**

Partnerships may employ a variety of strategies, techniques and tools to achieve goals, including memorandum of understanding, teams, focus groups, conferences, briefings, workshops, training, etc. Partnerships also may tap resources from a variety of sources. Please discuss the strategies used to accomplish the goals of the internal partnership or activity.

**NOMINATION PROCEDURES.** A call for nominations is made each year through the Department of the Interior's Office of Conservation, Partnerships and Management Policy. Nominations may be made by field, regional, or headquarters offices, partners, or contractors through a Department of the Interior bureau or office. Up to, but no more than five nominations in each category will be accepted from each bureau or office. Each nomination package must be submitted in both hard copy and electronic form and must include:

- (1) A DI-451 Award Certification Form with signatures of bureau/office head and appropriate Assistant Secretary; and for employees, certification by the nominee's servicing human resources office that a review of the nominee's Official Personnel Folder found no derogatory information.
- (2) Justification of no more than five pages that clearly documents significant contributions and achievements in the category criteria. The justification for the external category should be descriptive of on-the-ground, place-based conservation, and show shared responsibility among individual landowners, citizen groups, private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and other Federal, State, local, and tribal governments to demonstrate collaboration in achieving conservation goals. The justification for the internal category should describe the cooperative interactions and outcomes among the Department, bureaus, offices, programs, and/or disciplines. The nominations should reflect the caliber of contributions that warrant special national recognition.

- (3) A complete list of the full names of organizations and individuals who are integral to the partnership, team, or collaboration and who will receive an award certificate. The names are needed for the award certificates. Large certificates are generally for organizations or individual award winners, and small certificates are for the individuals within the organizations who have been key to the partnership.
- (4) A draft one-page citation that summarizes the partnership accomplishments.
- (5) Names and contact information for individuals preparing the nomination.

Nominations must be submitted to bureau/office headquarters for concurrence; the bureau/office head and the appropriate Assistant Secretary must concur on all nominations. The 2009 nominations must be submitted no later than December 4, 2009, to the Office of Conservation, Partnerships and Management Policy, "Attention: Ms. Beth Duff, 1849 C St, NW, Mailstop 5123, Washington, D.C. 20240," or electronically to <Beth\_Duff@ios.doi.gov>. For questions, please call Ms. Duff at 202-208-5904 or Ms. Olivia Barton Ferriter at 202-208-4881.

**SELECTION.** The Director, Conservation, Partnerships and Management Policy will organize the Partners in Conservation Awards selection panel. Each Assistant Secretary will be asked to designate staff to serve on the panel, which also will include representatives from Interior's Partners and Cooperation Team. The panel will review the nominations and will recommend award finalists for consideration by the Secretary.

**PRESENTATION.** Awards will be scheduled for presentation by the Secretary at a Departmental Awards Ceremony in the spring each year.