And the winners are...

Recently chosen by a binational panel of judges, these awards pay tribute to U.S. and Canadian recipients who have demonstrated a commitment to environmental stewardship through outstanding leadership in one of six categories: Youth, Individual Adult, Business, Industry, Municipality, or Organization.

The winners have taken successful actions that minimize negative impacts on the natural environment in the Lake Superior basin. Four Canadian groups and businesses also received an award for their exemplary work in northern Ontario. This year there were 10 winners in the U.S. and Canada, and three American honorable mentions.

Birch bark, sweet grass and pine cones...

Each year an artist from Michigan, Minnesota, or Wisconsin is chosen to hand craft a gift for U.S. winners that reflects a perspective unique to living around the world’s largest lake. This year, the Forum is proud to give an award that highlights a traditional craft representing the basin’s Native American culture and history.

Our award winners are receiving a birch bark basket handcrafted by Fred Wiser, an Anishinaabe member of the Bay Mills Indian Community in Brimley, Michigan. The baskets are made of sustainably harvested birch bark, sweet grass, and pine cones.

This style of basket has been used in Fred Wiser’s family for three generations to collect blueberries. It’s based on dimensions and a design created by Fred’s mother, Lillian Wiser. One of Lillian Wiser’s baskets is on permanent display at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of the American Indian in Washington DC.

U.S. Adult Individual:
Janet Green, Duluth, Minnesota

Jan Green has been involved in nearly every environmental issue in the western Great Lakes region for the past 40 years. Her love for nature and the Lake Superior environment has caused her to serve on numerous local, state, and regional committees such as the Board of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Forest Resources Council, Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy, Minnesota Ornithologists’ Union, and the state Board of Minnesota Audubon.

Jan Green has also been continually involved in conservation issues for the Duluth Audubon Club and serves as secretary of the Hawk Ridge Bird Observatory, which is a very successful organization that she helped create many years ago. She has led local zoning issues in the Lake Superior watershed and championed for the protection of riparian areas during forest harvesting activities. Jan Green is a true example of what one person can do to make significant positive contributions to her community and the environment.

U.S. Youth: Ron Kinnunen Marquette, Michigan

Ron has been developing exemplary youth education programs about Lake Superior such as the month-long Life on a Lake summer experiential program, two Lake Superior Youth Symposium conferences for high school students and teachers, commercial fishing, surviving rip tides, and many other youth-oriented programs. He has also developed numerous unique outreach campaigns for adults and families in the Upper Peninsula in his role as a Michigan District Sea Grant Educator.

U.S. Business Category: (a tie)

The Living Forest Cooperative Ashland, Wisconsin

The Living Forest Cooperative is a member-owned forestry cooperative that works for the economic, aesthetic, and ecological health of forest lands through responsible forestry practices. Members prepare forest stewardship plans that ensure forests are restored to ecological stability. The business strives to produce high quality, value-added wood products that strengthen the community with sustainable businesses.

This business recognizes that healthy forests improve water quality in the Lake Superior Basin. About 200 Co-op members have managed more than 10,000 acres of northern Wisconsin forests, which provide surface and ground water, habitat for wildlife, and products for commerce.

M & I Bank Ashland, Wisconsin

Carol Pufall, an employee at the M & I Bank, organized a voluntary thermometer and mercury recycling project. The two-page ad for the project appeared in the Adirondack Daily Enterprise. In 2009, 22 community members, including a school, a jeweler, and an insurance office, participated in the project. This resulted in over 100 grams of mercury being collected.

U.S. Organization: The Weber Stream Restoration Initiative Duluth, Minnesota

The Weber Stream Restoration Initiative is a collaboration of Duluth-area organizations created in 2005 by an endowment from Mr. Ron Weber to the Natural Resources Research Institute at the University of Minnesota Duluth. The goal was to improve water quality and habitat in Lake Superior trout streams. The Weber Initiative has led to a multi-organization partnership of 25 groups that chose the Amity Creek and Lester River watersheds as demonstration streams for implementing and assessing the success and cost effectiveness of restoration efforts.

This partnership has undertaken dozens of projects but I’ll just mention a few here. More can be found at the web site: lakesuperiorstreams.org

Project activities include community outreach campaigns that help watershed residents understand how their daily activities affect Duluth and North Shore streams. The group investigated alternative building ordinances that will reduce development impacts on the landscape. Partners have implemented stormwater management techniques in Duluth residential neighborhoods which reduced runoff into streams. And last year, two major restoration projects repaired damaged stream banks on Amity Creek.

Additional activities have been approved for funding by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative with work beginning this September.

U.S. Municipality: Superior School District Superior, Wisconsin

We’re happy to present the municipality award to the Superior School District of Superior, Wisconsin, for extensive efforts to improve energy efficiency in eight school buildings.

The district’s building managers helped reduce their carbon footprint through an aggressive district-wide campaign that replaced coal burning heaters with computerized natural gas heaters. This resulted in a 27 percent reduction of energy use. Virtually all lighting fixtures have been replaced with high efficiency fluorescent bulbs. These actions have saved city taxpayers almost $42,000 since 2005. Each building engineer takes great pride in energy reductions, and schools have developed a friendly competition to reduce energy use further each year.

2010 Lake Superior Binational Forum’s Annual Environmental Stewardship Awards Program
Distinguished Visitor

Cameron Davis is Senior Advisor to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator. In that capacity he provides counsel to Administrator Lisa Jackson on the Obama Administration’s Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. His job includes coordinating Great Lakes policy and funding initiatives with more than one dozen federal agencies and with state, municipal, tribal, business and civic stakeholders. The focus of this work involves restoring habitat, reducing pollution, preventing the introduction of invasive species, reducing runoff and enhancing coastal health for people, fish and wildlife.

For more than two decades, Mr. Davis has worked to develop and implement water quality and quantity policy. Starting as a volunteer, he served as a litigating attorney and law teacher at the University of Michigan Law School before serving as president and CEO of the Alliance for the Great Lakes. Under his leadership, the organization won the American Bar Association’s Distinguished Award in Environmental Law & Policy, the first time for a public interest organization in the honor’s history. He earned his law degree, including certification in environmental and energy law, from the Chicago-Kent College of Law and a B.A. from Boston University in International Relations. He is the author of Confluence (BookSurge 2009), the first of a new genre, the “genoir.”

While working in Washington, D.C., Chicago and throughout the eight Great Lakes states, Cam lives across the street from Lake Michigan with his wife, Dr. Katelyn Varhely, and son, where they try to swim in the lake several times a week, but only when it’s warm enough.

The Lake Superior Binational Forum is a multi-sector stakeholder group of U.S. and Canadian volunteers working together to provide input to governments about lake issues and to educate basin residents about ways to protect and restore the lake. Members are from Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, in the U.S. and Ontario, Canada.

The Forum is located in the United States at the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute at Northland College in Ashland, Wisconsin, and is funded in the U.S. by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Great Lakes National Program Office. The Canadian Forum office is at EcoSuperior in Thunder Bay, Ontario, and is funded by Environment Canada.

For more information: www.superiorforum.org

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