



Forest Watch Honors Two Veteran Program Teachers With Annual Award

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DURHAM, N.H. - Norma Bursaw of Salem High School in Salem and Brian Doyle of Noble Middle School in Berwick, Maine, each received the 2008 Gary N. Lauten Award for outstanding service and commitment to the University of New Hampshire's Forest Watch program at a ceremony held recently on the Durham campus.

Bursaw, who teaches high school biology, and 7th grade science teacher Doyle have been active in Forest Watch since 1994. This is the first time two teachers have been simultaneously honored with the award.

Forest Watch is a unique way of conducting science with the help of primary and secondary school students across New England who collect and process data relating to air pollution damage in forest stands near their schools. Since its inception in 1991, more than 350 schools have participated in the program, with some 50 to 100 actively engaged in monitoring white pines, a bio-indicator species for ground-level ozone (smog), in any given year.

Says Doyle, "For me, Forest Watch has been an integral part of my teaching since I began. I've had to be quite creative with weaving it into curriculum, but it's a great program in terms of the kids doing real, hands-on science and gathering data that is actually used by UNH scientists."

Notes Bursaw, who uses Forest Watch in her honors biology II classes, "For a lot of my students they like it because it's not a cookbook lab, they're not just learning a protocol, it's real science that counts for something."

For 18 years, Forest Watch has demonstrated that students can collect valuable data for ongoing scientific research and learn science and mathematics by doing research in their local areas. Student data have clearly shown how responsive white pines are to year-to-year variations in ozone levels. NASA's New Hampshire Space Grant Consortium (<http://www.nhsgc.sr.unh.edu>) has sponsored Forest Watch since 1991.

"Over the years, I've been very impressed with how well student data mirror annual variations in air quality," says Barry Rock, director of Forest Watch and professor of natural resources and plant biology at UNH's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space (EOS) and the department of natural resources and the environment. "During a poor air quality summer student data indicate poor tree health, but during a good air quality summer, the data indicate improved tree health."

Notes David Bartlett, director of NHSGC, "One of NASA's primary goals for the Space Grant program is to fill the future pipeline of Americans skilled in science, math, and technology. This has to start with young students, and there is no better way than to provide dedicated, talented teachers such as Norma and Brian with hands-on activities like Forest Watch."

Lauten, a former Air Force lieutenant colonel who died in December 2001, served as the Forest Watch program coordinator from 1992-1999. In 2002, the educational outreach program began recognizing teachers who best exemplify Lauten's devotion to Forest Watch's long-term goals.

"This award recognizes Gary's commitment to making science accessible in the pre-college classroom. He loved the program and became its heart and soul," says Rock. He adds, "Teachers love the program because it integrates biology with physics, math, Earth science, et cetera."

The Lauten Award is given each spring at the Forest Watch workshop held in Durham on the UNH campus. Also recognized at this year's workshop were four seventh graders from the Gilmanton (N.H.) School who last summer presented their Forest Watch work to scientists from around the world at the 2008 IEEE International Geoscience & Remote Sensing Symposium held in Boston.

According to Rock, the lessons of Forest Watch are clear: Even the youngest students can learn science by doing science, and tree health varies year-to-year in response to variations in air quality across New England. Outreach programs like Forest Watch can contribute in meaningful ways to improved public understanding of the regional impact poor air quality can have on forest health.

For more information on Forest Watch, go to <http://www.forestwatch.sr.unh.edu>.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 11,800 undergraduate and 2,400 graduate students.

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Photo available to download: http://www.eos.unh.edu/newsimage/lauten09_lg.jpg.

Caption: From left to right, Forest Watch program Coordinator Mike Gagnon, Brian Doyle, Norma Bursaw, Barry Rock.

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