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UNH Honors Teacher for Work in Forest Watch Program

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Dec. 1, 2003

DURHAM, N.H. – Elementary school teacher Bob Dyer of the Shapleigh (Maine) Memorial School has been awarded the 2003 Gary N. Lauten Award for outstanding service and commitment to the University of New Hampshire's Forest Watch program.

"This award is presented to the Forest Watch teacher who most exemplifies Gary's love of the program and his devotion to the program's long-term goals," said Barry Rock, Forest Watch director and professor of natural resources and plant biology at UNH's Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space (EOS).

Left to right: Mike Gagon, Forest Watch program coordinator; Barry Rock, Forest Watch program director; Bob Dyer, Lauten Award recipient; and Darien Lauten, Gary Lauten's widow.

Forest Watch is an educational outreach program that gets primary and secondary students directly involved in the collection and processing of data about air pollution damage in white pine forest stands. The program conveys the excitement and importance of hands-on science and the value of understanding the impacts of environmental factors on forested ecosystems to K-12 students across New England.

Lauten, who received a master's degree in plant biology from UNH after retiring from the Air Force as a lieutenant colonel, became a UNH research scientist and was involved in the development and continuation of Forest Watch.

He served as the program's coordinator from 1992-1999. He died in December of 2001. "This award recognizes Gary's commitment to making science accessible in the classroom. He loved the program and became its heart and soul, said Rock"

Dyer, a long-time Forest Watch teacher, is the second recipient of the Lauten award. Rock presented Dyer with a certificate and a handcrafted walking stick bearing the Forest Watch logo. Of the gift Rock said, "This is very appropriate because I leaned on Gary a lot."

Like other teachers involved in the program, Dyer has his students collect white pine needles from a 30 x 30 meter plot each year. They then conduct several ecological and biophysical

measurements using specific scientific protocols developed at UNH. The samples are measured and analyzed physically by the students who look for evidence of damage to the needles from ozone (smog).

Their results, as well as needle samples, are shipped to UNH for further analysis. The program has demonstrated that students can collect valuable data for ongoing scientific research and learn science and mathematics by doing research in their local area.

"This allows kids to get physically involved in doing real science, from field sampling and analysis to seeing their data up on the Internet," Dyer said.
Forest Watch, which is funded by the New Hampshire Space Grant Consortium, currently includes more than 200 schools and study plots across New England, and allows UNH to conduct a regional analysis of white pine health.

Student data are compared to spectrometer measurements (which gauge how much chlorophyll needles contain) collected from samples sent to UNH, and the student and spectral data are compared to tropospheric ozone data collected from state and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air quality monitoring sites throughout New England. Student samples provide evidence of changing white pine health and growth year after year in response to both smog levels and climate variables such as rainfall.

For more information on Forest Watch, go to www.forestwatch.sr.unh.edu.

A digital photo is available at the Web site:
http://unhinfo.unh.edu/news/img/eos/lautenaward.jpg
Photo Caption: Left to right: Mike Gagon, Forest Watch program coordinator;
Barry Rock, Forest Watch program director; Bob Dyer, Lauten Award recipient; and
Darien Lauten, Gary Lauten's widow.