

## Media Relations

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### UNH Forest Watch Honors Two Teachers With Annual Award

DURHAM, NH – Forest Watch, the University of New Hampshire’s pioneering K-12 inquiry-based research program, recently recognized two teachers for 17 years of service to the program and their students at a ceremony held on the Durham campus.

High school teacher Frank Schmidt of Hebron, CT and 6th grade science teacher Otto Wurzburg of St. Johnsbury, VT each received the 2014 Gary N. Lauten Award for outstanding service and commitment. The event was held as part of the Forest Watch annual teacher workshop.

For more than 20 years, Forest Watch has taken students and teachers out of their classrooms to study air pollution and forest health. Since 1991, more than 350 schools across New England have helped researchers at UNH to gather samples and measurements of white pine needles to monitor the impacts of ground-level ozone, or smog. Student data have clearly shown that white pine health is closely tied to variations in ozone levels, which have dropped steadily in NH since 1991.

Schmidt teaches environmental Earth sciences at RHAM High School in Hebron and at Eastern Connecticut State University. Wurzburg teaches 6th grade science at St. Johnsbury School. Both teachers joined Forest Watch in 1997 and noted that the Forest Watch curriculum and protocols are perfectly adapted for modern science classes, new demands for interdisciplinary studies, and inquiry-based learning.

“I know Forest Watch has meant a great deal to my students because they feel they are playing a part in finding answers to at least one of the myriad environmental problems we face,” said Wurzburg,

Added Schmidt, “Forest Watch is such a rich program that I developed an entire, interdisciplinary class, called Forest Watch, that involves the biology of the tree, the chemistry of ozone, and the physics of light and photosynthesis.”

Students and teachers in 25 schools in New Hampshire, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts and Connecticut sampled 110 trees in the 2012-2013 school year. Measurements of an estimated 10,000 pine needles find evidence that the pines are recuperating from a severe loss of needles in 2010 and 2011 thought to have been caused by massive smoke plumes from Canadian forest fires.

The good health of the pines, Forest Watch has shown, is due in part to a successful New England-wide effort by the Environmental Protection Agency and New England states to improve air quality.

Partnerships between schools and research scientists, such as Forest Watch, are a “critically important part of developing the next generation of NASA scientists,” said Antoinette Galvin, director of the NH Space Grant Consortium, which has supported Forest Watch since its inception.

Forest Watch will offer a three-day training workshop for new teachers August 11-13. For more information visit [www.forestwatch.sr.unh.edu](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 12,300 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

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