

Media Relations

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UNH Prof Recognized for Lifetime Citizen Science Work March 13



DURHAM, N.H. – University of New Hampshire botanist Barrett Rock has been selected by the Youth Learning as Citizen Environmental Scientists (YLACES) grant-making organization as the first recipient of its Youth Environmental Science Medal in recognition of his formative work in the development and implementation of inquiry-based, experiential K-12 science education.

The YES medal for outstanding leadership in K-12 environmental citizen science outreach will be presented to Rock on Friday, March 13, 2015, at the National Science Teachers Association National Annual Meeting in Chicago, Illinois.

Rock, professor emeritus at the Earth Systems Research Center within the UNH Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans and Space (EOS), is being honored for founding the inquiry-based UNH Forest Watch program in 1991 and for contributions he made in establishing the measurement system of the Global Learning and Observations to Benefit the Environment (GLOBE) education program while serving as its first chief scientist and assistant director from 1994 to 1995.

“My outreach work with K-12 students has been so important and so meaningful because, for example, the middle school years are a pivotal point in anyone's schooling and science and math in particular is a tough sell at that age, the students think it's all geeky and hard,” says Rock. “But if you can engage them in hands-on science in their own back yard, and show them that you're doing really interesting science and that they can be a vital and meaningful part of that, you can definitely win a few over and perhaps propel them into scientific careers.”

Forest Watch is centered on K-12 student measurements and health assessments of white pine—a known bio-indicator species for exposure to ozone in the air. Since its founding, more than 350 schools across New England have been involved in Forest Watch.

GLOBE is an international partnership of students, teachers, and scientists that supports students with hands-on science activities and measurement protocols designed to provide scientists with reliable global-scale data. GLOBE has enriched the education of over 1.5 million students and raised

community environmental awareness in over 100 countries while providing over 100 million measurements using a system of protocols pioneered by Rock.

Rock served as GLOBE's first chief scientist based on his expertise in designing and implementing Forest Watch, which like GLOBE has at its core accurate, reliable, student-gathered data that scientists can use to further their research. Vice President Al Gore, who in his 1992 book "Earth in Balance" had proposed the idea of engaging school children to collect real-time scientific data from around the world, asked Rock to be GLOBE's chief scientist since Forest Watch provided a successful, working template for that approach.

Rock's research has focused on the impact of air pollutants on forest species using Earth-orbiting satellite data and ground-based reflectance measurements to monitor forest health in New England and central European countries of Poland, Germany, and the Czech Republic. As important as his scientific investigative work has been throughout his career, which included time at NASA's Jet Propulsion Lab, his outreach work with K-12 students has been the most satisfying.

The non-profit YLACES is dedicated to improving science education by having young people conduct science as environmental citizen scientists. In conjunction with the YES award, YLACES has contributed \$10,000 to [Forest Watch](#) in honor of professor Rock.

Says Dixon Butler, YLACES president, "It is our privilege to recognize the foundational contributions of Dr. Rock. His work has enabled youth doing environmental science through programs that have lasted 20 years and are poised for significant future growth."

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.

-30-

Image to download: http://www.eos.unh.edu/newsimage/brock_lg.jpg

Caption: Barry Rock. Photo by Kristi Donahue, UNH-EOS.

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