



American Recreation Coalition

Dedicated to the protection and enhancement of everyone's right to health and happiness through recreation.

NEWS

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2016 BEACON AWARD WINNERS APPLY TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE RECREATION IN AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS

Washington, D.C. (June 1, 2016) - Five federal efforts have won Beacon Awards in 2016 from the American Recreation Coalition (ARC) for outstanding successes in harnessing the power of technology to improve public recreation experiences and federal recreation program management. Winners were selected from efforts of four federal agencies. Beacon Awards were first presented by the American Recreation Coalition in 2005. Nominations are made by federal agencies and are judged against the award criteria, which are:

- 1) Innovative use of technology for visitor services or recreation management;
- 2) Use of partnerships with for-profit and nonprofit organizations;
- 3) Efforts to share news of creative solutions within the agency; and
- 4) Community support for the work of this initiative.

The recipients of ARC's 2015 Beacon Awards were honored on Wednesday, June 1st, at a presentation in the U.S. Department of Interior. Recipients are:

USDA Forest Service: Eastern Region for its "Travel the Heart" Partnership with the National Geographic Society

The Heart of the Continent Partnership (HOCP) connects the public to recreational and cultural opportunities in the Quetico-Superior region of Minnesota and Ontario through an interactive, web-based mapping application. This international geotourism initiative includes an interactive map, a mobile app, and www.traveltheheart.org. Led by the Forest Service and the National Geographic Society (NGS), the project highlights the zone's rich natural, cultural and historical resources. The initiative relies on a unified cross-border approach and the brand power of NGS to increase visitation in the region. The idea for a geotourism site, one of 22 sites worldwide, began at HOCP's 2011 meeting. NGS participated and noted the region's vast wealth of natural and cultural assets and the commitment to collaboration among diverse organizations, public and private. The website and interactive modules launched in 2015. The site nurtures common identity and sense of belonging to 5+ million acre Heart of the Continent area. "Travel the Heart" is truly a beacon providing state-of-the-art online travel information across the globe and a collaborative partnership vested in marketing and protecting world-class tourism assets.

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U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Richard Easterbrook, for Personal and Professional Leadership

In 2015, Richard Easterbrook uncovered a lack of accuracy and uniformity in the agency's public information about visitor centers and contact station locations throughout the National Wildlife Refuge System. Recognizing agency support for growth in public interest in refuges, Richard initiated an ambitious effort to transfer existing data to a standardized geodatabase. And then the real work began. He used old-fashioned detective work to obtain missing information, contacting Service field stations, reviewing information on national wildlife refuge web pages, and using aerial imagery to locate visitor services features. This time intensive work produced the first consistent national data set that can be used to identify the exact location of key visitor facilities. The agency now has more accurate on-line national wildlife refuge maps for hundreds of locations across the country, depicting specific locations of visitor centers, contact stations, and kiosks where the public can interact with staff and volunteers and find important information about outdoor recreation programs and conservation work. Tens of millions of visitors each year now enjoy safer, better visits to national wildlife refuges. The new data layer is also available for others to use, including state and local destination marketing organizations.

National Park Service: Dolly McNulty for Service as ColdCache Coordinator of the Ice Age Trail Alliance

Dolly McNulty, a volunteer, is the official ColdCache Coordinator for the Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA), the major non-profit partner of the Ice Age National Scenic Trail. Her dedication, commitment and innovation have inspired many and deepened appreciation of the Ice Age Trail for thousands of visitors. Dolly has been the driving force behind the truly innovative recreational and trail engagement program known as "ColdCaching," an outdoor education program based on GeoCaching and EarthCaching, but with a unique twist. ColdCaching participants use technology to enhance their trail experience and enjoy the thrill of a treasure hunt while seeking out natural features connected to Wisconsin's Ice Age history. Since 2008, Dolly has grown the program to its present size and complexity, personally creating 45 of today's 78 ColdCaching sites. ColdCaching has developed significant partnerships with the private sector and attracts a wide variety of diverse youth from both rural and urban school districts. Her efforts are both a beacon for use of technology and for the role of skilled volunteers on America's public lands and waters.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: David Gray for Innovative Use of Technology to Improve Visitor Experiences

David Gray is the USACE Baltimore District's senior Visual Information Specialist. He is passionate and committed to success and innovation. David created videos promoting the District's recreation opportunities through YouTube, the USACE Baltimore District smartphone app, and at visitor centers. His work, including 360° online tours of Tioga-Hammond, Cowanesque, Jennings Randolph, and Raystown lakes and Poplar Island, is used at regional tourism shows. David led creation of videos highlighting the Bill Nesbit Memorial Hunt, which allows physically disabled hunters, including wounded veterans, the opportunity to harvest a deer. David was the first employee in North Atlantic Division to

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put drone technology to use and serves on the HQUSACE Drone Working Group to better understand and utilize this capability nationwide. David has greatly improved Baltimore District's ability to tell its recreation, environmental stewardship, flood risk management, water supply and navigation stories. His work is especially key to explaining the relevancy of USACE to youth and non-traditional visitors. Technology is becoming the gateway for public lands and waters visits and David Gray's work has been crucial in harnessing use of social media outlets, smartphone apps and interactive solutions by USACE.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: Jason Knight for Innovative Use of Technology to Improve Recreation Program Management

Jason Knight is the Recreation Planner, for the USACE Tulsa District, following service as a Natural Resource Park Ranger at the Alatoona Lake Office, Mobile District. His efforts have national impact. His outstanding use of emerging technology resulted in development of the Park Ranger Mobile App, which now allows USACE staff to serve visitors at projects throughout the nation more efficiently and effectively. Rangers can access emergency contacts, Corps regulations, hunting/lake maps, shoreline management applications, flood elevation information, citation/warning history, and more are while in the field, and can share important information with visitors. His work in expanding partnerships and encouraging volunteerism have also made major impacts, including expansion of disc golf courses at USACE sites and partnership-based campground renovation and repair work to mitigate the impacts of flooding. He is a leader in improving the USACE Visitor Estimation and Reporting System and the Operations and Maintenance Business Information Link and was the recipient of the 2014 United States Army Corps of Engineers' National Innovator of the Year Award.

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About the American Recreation Coalition:

AMERICAN RECREATION COALITION — is a nonprofit, Washington-based association providing a unified voice for recreation interests on issues such as public land management. ARC's membership is more than 100 organizations, including national and regional associations and corporations that represent a major share of the \$650 billion a year recreation/leisure industry and enthusiast groups representing millions of recreationists. Since 1979, ARC has forged public-private partnerships to enhance and protect outdoor recreation opportunities and resources. ARC conducts research, organizes national meetings and disseminates information, including through its Web site www.funoutdoors.com. ARC plays a leading role in key coalitions, including the Coalition for Recreational Trails, and leads efforts to celebrate June as Great Outdoors Month® including National Get Outdoors Day, a national effort to invite children to enjoy healthy, active outdoor lives.