The Conservation

Landowners are recognized for their unselfish drive to care for the land.

Story By Kathy Andrews
Photos By Carl Handel

In his musings on the development of a land ethic, Aldo Leopold, considered by many to be the father of wildlife management, wrote that "The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land."

Each year, the Department of Natural Resources' Division of Wildlife Resources recognizes a few private property land owners as Wildlife Landowners of the Year. These are just some of the folks around the state who have a broad vision of the land and the drive to carry out extraordinary work to develop their property as a community.

According to DNR District Wildlife Biologist Carl Handel, 2009 award winners Roy and Kim Tsuda, Decatur, see the habitat impacts of living in the central Illinois agricultural belt and work to "do it all" to improve their properties.

"Although he's motivated by a hunting interest, Tsuda has worked for more than 10 years giving back to the land," Handel explained. "Tsuda loves duck hunting, and as a result he develops wetlands on all his property."

Roy Tsuda (left) stands before one of the wetlands he has created. Tsuda is one of the 2009 Wildlife Landowners of the Year.

So motivated by the first wetland built through the CREP program, Tsuda undertook construction of the next two on his own. Always striving for the greater good, Tsuda is working with state and federal agencies to develop a 30-40 acre wetland on his DeWitt County property.

Like other landowners, Tsuda recognizes the need for a community to contain a diversity of cover types, and prairie and woodland plantings are integrated into all his management plans.

Regardless of the corner of the state they hail from, or the spark that got them interested in enhancing their property, a common thread binds the Wildlife Landowners of the Year: Being conservation-minded.

"These folks recognize that it takes active and recurring maintenance of the habitat practices they have installed to provide optimum wildlife habitat," said Mike McCulley, manager of the Division of Wildlife Resources Field Management Section. "These dedicated folks relish the time they spend working the land and know that their actions are a way to give back to the community for the enjoyment they have received."

Awardees

DNR recognizes five landowners as 2009 Wildlife Landowner of the Year Award winners

- Dan Sawicki, Ogle County, Rochelle, nominated by Frank Ostling
- Pat Hogan, Kendall County, Oswego, nominated by Joe Rogus
- Roy and Kim Tsuda, Macon and DeWitt counties, Decatur, nominated by Carl Handel
- Michael and Gail Cochran, Brown County, Timewell, nominated by Tim Krumwiede
- Tim and Bill Rengel, Saline County, Troy and Freeburg, nominated by John Bozett

A variety of conservation programs, including DNR's Acres for Wildlife, the USDA Conservation Reserve Program and assistance from private not-for-profit conservation organizations, are available to aid private landowners benefit fish and wildlife. For additional information, contact your county district wildlife biologist (listed at www.dnr.state.il.us/orc/wildliferesources).

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Many landowners recognize the value of enhancing their land with a diversity of habitat types, including prairies, woodlands and wetlands.

(Photo By Paul Willms.)