

Seven wetland educators, scientists, and conservationists were selected as recipients of the **2005 National Wetlands Awards** for exemplary contributions in conserving or restoring the Nation's wetlands. They will be honored at a Capitol Hill presentation on May 18, 2005 in Washington, DC. One of the seven recipients is MAWPT representative, **Tom Foti**, Chief of Research at Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission.



Mr. Tom Foti's three-decade career has had a great impact on the wetlands of Arkansas. His work at the Arkansas Ecology Center helped save the Cache River, now a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance, from channelization. Mr. Foti conducted the first inventory of natural areas in Arkansas, which resulted in his publication of "The Natural Divisions of Arkansas" in *The Natural Area Plan*, and the creation of the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission (ANHC). Since joining the ANHC in 1985, Mr. Foti has identified and protected natural communities of the state, including many uncommon wetlands. He coauthored the hydrogeomorphic classification of Arkansas wetlands and the five regional guidebooks for HGM assessment in Arkansas. He worked with the Environmental Protection Agency to improve and subdivide Arkansas's ecoregions, and with NatureServe to refine the U.S. National Vegetation Classification to better reflect wetland diversity in the state. Because of Tom's involvement in a broad range of projects, a consistency is emerging in the way that the state and its partners describe, restore, and manage wetlands within the greater context of their ecological systems, ecoregions, and the state as a whole. Finally, Mr. Foti also is a highly productive author whose works range from technical research papers to popular works for general audiences, including schoolchildren.

The National Wetlands Awards Program celebrates individuals who have demonstrated extraordinary dedication, innovation or excellence in wetlands conservation. Their work covers programs or projects on the regional, state and local levels. National Wetlands Awardees show how individuals can and do make a difference. Their efforts to educate the public and surrounding communities about the value of wetlands, the programs that are available to protect and restore wetlands, and the value of cooperation among grassroots organizations, educational organizations, private landowners, and federal, state, and local government agencies to protect wetland resources.

The National Wetlands Awards Program is co-sponsored by the Environmental Law Institute, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, NOAA Fisheries, and the Federal Highway Administration.