



North Carolina Coastal Federation | 3609 Hwy 24 (Ocean) | Newport, NC 28570
Phone: 252-393-8185 | Fax: 252-393-7508 | Email: nccf@nccoast.org | Web: <http://www.nccoast.org>

Press Release

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Contact: Jim Stephenson, Program Analyst
Phone: 252-393-8185 **Email:** jims@nccoast.org

NCCF Recognizes Top Coastal Stewards

Ocean, NC – A quiet engineer who helped fashion many of the rules on coastal development and a boisterous citizens' group pushing for better controls on runaway growth are among the 19 people, organizations and government agencies that will receive the N.C. Coastal Federation's 2005 Pelican Awards.

"The Federation gives the awards each year to citizens, legislators, government officials, educators and others who have demonstrated exemplary commitment to protecting our coast," noted Todd Miller, the Federation's executive director.

"It's our way of recognizing people and groups that have gone beyond the ordinary in protecting and restoring our coastal environment and culture," Miller said. "Our hope is that their example will inspire others."

The awards will be presented at a ceremony and luncheon Thursday, June 1, at the Core Sound Waterfowl Museum and Heritage Center on Harkers Island in Carteret County. The Federation's annual *State of the Coast Report* will also be released then. David Stick, the noted Outer Banks historian, will give the keynote address.

Gene Tomlinson, who for 28 years was the heart and soul of the N.C. Coastal Resources Commission before retiring last year, will receive the Federation's Lifetime Achievement Award. Born in Fayetteville, Tomlinson is an engineer who spent most of his life in the seaside town of Southport. He was appointed to the commission in 1977 and was at the helm when the commission, which sets development policies along the coast, approved most of the major controls on development. He played a key role in the turbulent passage of the ban on seawalls on the oceanfront and inlets.

Tomlinson could bring people together on controversial issues, and passionately, yet calmly, articulate the need for action. "And we see [nursery areas and productive fishing grounds] being gobbled up by people who would bulldoze in the marshes, who would put in

bulkheads and fill behind them, who would bulkhead the oceanfront so that we become like New Jersey or Miami Beach,” he said in a 1995 interview.

The residents of eastern Carteret County proved that you can fight city hall, or in this case, the county courthouse. When they found themselves the target of the next wave of waterfront development, the residents of the rural and relatively undeveloped portion of the county, called Down East, rose up in protest. The grassroots citizens’ group they formed, Down East Tomorrow, was one of three activist groups that the Federation recognized with a Pelican Award.

The group persuaded the Carteret County Board of Commissioners to hold public meetings on growth and development issues. More than 1,000 people attended. The group then petitioned the commissioners to issue a one-year moratorium on high-density development while the residents work with the county planning staff on an ecosystem-based comprehensive plan that protects Down East water quality and preserves the region’s rich maritime heritage. The group is also asking for a land-use ordinance to enforce the goals and policies of the land-use plan.

The other Pelican Award winners are:

Legislator of the Year: Sen. Charlie Albertson, D- Duplin, for his support of bills to restore oysters and study global warming.

State Government: Mike Street, N.C. Division of Marine Fisheries, for his lifelong commitment to fisheries conservation.

Local Governments: Northern coast -- Chesapeake, Va., for opposing a mega-landfill in neighboring Camden County; Central Coast -- Cape Carteret, for requiring a proposed Lowe’s Home Improvement Center to exceed state stormwater regulations; Southern Coast -- Holly Ridge for agreeing to maintain and police a public pier and walkway on Stump Sound.

Citizen Action: Northern coast -- Wanchese Zoning Committee, for working with citizens to tailor a zoning ordinance in Wanchese; Southern Coast -- Brunswick Citizens for a Safe Environment for opposing a landfill in Navassa.

Environmental Educator: Margery Misenheimer, Smyrna Elementary School in Carteret County, for her dedication to her craft, for her hands-on teaching methods, and for being the science teacher you always wanted.

Environmental Research: Ronald Hodson, for 33 years of dedication to fisheries science as director of North Carolina Sea Grant. He retires this year.

NCCF Volunteers of the Year: Northern Coast: Mike Halminski of Waves in Dare County, for his involvement as a COASTKEEPER® volunteer captain and stormwater sampler and as the Federation’s unofficial photographer; Central Coast -- Sarah Hamilton, Dot Reist, and Ann White, for creating and maintaining the Federation’s Nature Library; Southern Coast -- Tom Tewey, a COASTKEEPER® volunteer captain in Wilmington who organized a series of public workshops to protect a creek near his house.

Conservation & Restoration Project: Northern Coast -- Chris McClung, for a “living shoreline” project in Albemarle Plantation near Hertford; Central Coast -- Onslow Bight Conservation Forum, a partnership of state and federal agencies and private organizations that

is protecting land in a nine-county region; Southern Coast: David Nash of the N.C. Cooperative Extension Service, who has made a career of restoring beach dune systems flattened by hurricanes.

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***About the North Carolina Coastal Federation:
“Citizens Working Together for a Healthy Coast”***

The North Carolina Coastal Federation (NCCF) is the state's largest nonprofit organization working to restore and protect the coast. NCCF headquarters are located at 3609 Highway 24 in Ocean between Morehead City and Swansboro and are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 5 pm. The headquarters include NCCF's main offices, the Cape Lookout Coastkeeper office, a gift shop, Nature Library, Weber Seashell Exhibit, ShoreKeeper Learning Center, and adjoining nature trail. The NCCF also operates field offices in Wilmington and Manteo. For more information call 252-393-8185 or check out NCCF's website at www.nccoast.org