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Seven Maine Groups Receive Environmental Awards

Contact: David Deegan, EPA Office of Public Affairs, (617) 918-1017,
deegan.dave@epa.gov

For Immediate Release: May 17, 2005; Release #dd050516

(Boston - May 17, 2005) Seven Maine groups were honored today in Boston's Faneuil Hall as EPA presented the 2005 Environmental Merit Awards. Recognizing significant contributions to environmental awareness and problem solving, the Maine awardees included two for business, industry and professional organizations, two for efforts by local, state or federal governments and three for work by environmental/community/academia/non-profit organizations.

The merit awards, given out since 1970, honor individuals and groups who have shown particular ingenuity and commitment in their efforts to preserve the region's environment. This year's competition drew approximately 70 nominations from across New England.

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"These awards are among the highest honors EPA can bestow to recognize environmental accomplishments," said Robert W. Varney, regional administrator for EPA's New England Office. "The work of these individuals, organizations and businesses reflect the best attributes of New Englanders, working to find solutions to environmental issues. I offer my gratitude for their extraordinary contributions in protecting the environment."

The winners from Maine were among 38 from across New England. Awards were given in the categories of individual; business (including professional organizations); local, state or federal government; and environmental, community, academia or nonprofit organization. Also, each year EPA may present lifetime achievement awards for individuals.

Environmental Merit Award Winners from Maine are:

Local, State or Federal Governmental Environmental Merit Award:

Maine Drinking Water Program Nancy Beardsley

Nancy Beardsley, director of the Maine Drinking Water Program in the state Department of Human Services, has been a leader in protection of the state's drinking water. Since Nancy took over Maine's Drinking Water program in 2000, the once beleaguered program has thrived. A 1999 EPA audit of the program had identified serious program deficiencies, including conflicting

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procedures, low staff morale and inconsistent directions to staff. Under Nancy, the program has turned from problematic to exemplary. She has worked with Bureau of Health management to upgrade many positions, resulting in higher pay scales and higher job satisfaction. In addition, she has instituted frequent management/staff interactions, with regular staff meetings and feedback procedures. The results speak for themselves: the Maine DW program has taken the lead in New England. Maine was the first State in the region to partner with EPA and offer training to water systems on compliance issues with the Arsenic Rule. Four workshops were offered in 2003 that are now models for training several New England states, and the Maine program is working directly with more than 120 affected water systems to define arsenic problems and determine treatment alternatives. Since Nancy took the reins, Maine's DW program has developed a reputation as a strong leader on source water protection and other important drinking water issues.

Local, State or Federal Governmental Environmental Merit Award:

Indian Health Service-Bangor Area Office

Dana Baer, Phillip Rapp, Ken Grant, Al Weeks, Maryellen Sockabasin

The Bangor Area Office of the Indian Health Service has protected the health and safety of Indian tribes in New England – specifically through its use of EPA's Drinking Water and Wastewater Programs. This office offered immediate help to both the EPA and the tribes by prioritizing funding for improvements to drinking water and wastewater treatment projects. Since 1999, the office has managed more than 15 tribal water and wastewater improvement projects. This award also honors Dana Baer, a Tribal Utility Coordinator for the office and other Indian Health Services staff – Phillip Rapp, Ken Grant, Al Weeks and Maryellen Sockabasin. Dana and her staff have helped tribes by providing training sessions, troubleshooting operation and water quality problems, delineating source water areas, drawing up plans for completed infrastructure projects, performing construction inspections, and becoming a valuable resource in dealing with any issue confronting a tribe on these projects. The office initiated a mapping project that shows every infrastructure asset for Maine tribes on digital aerial maps that can easily be imported into mapping software. This work has generated unsolicited praise from the tribes, from co-workers and from EPA personnel.

Environmental, Community, Academia & Non-Profit Organization Environmental Merit Award:

Coastal Recycling Center

Hancock, Maine

The Coastal Recycling Center has operated for 14 years thanks to a citizen-based initiative and support from surrounding towns. Coastal provides a central place for packaging, storing and shipping materials to be recycled. Staffed with part time workers, the center receives deliveries from individuals, towns or companies interested in having raw materials packaged for shipment to the Maine Municipal Recycling Association. The town of Hancock leases the land and building to Coastal Recycling at no cost. Before Coastal was founded, virtually all recyclables went to the landfill or incinerator. Now, hundreds of residents have started recycling and hundreds of tons have been diverted from the waste stream. With recycling experiencing a drop in support nationally, Coastal last year was faced with the possibility of closing or being 'privatized'. Coastal's board rescued the operation. Changes made by the board have made it possible for other towns and companies to participate, increasing volume and income. The board is encouraging more use of the facility through awareness of the beneficial aspects of recycling. Many member communities have gone to a 'pay as you throw' system, prompting some residents to recycle. When it learned many organizations would recycle but lacked the manpower to deliver recyclables, board members recruited

volunteers to 'adopt' an area business, school or other entity. As a result, several area businesses are now recycling. Coastal has withstood the test of time and still strives to provide recycling services to this rural coastal region.

**Environmental, Community, Academia & Non-Profit
Organization Environmental Merit Award:**

Maine Rural Water Association

The Maine Rural Water Association helps small, rural public drinking water systems by giving technical help and training to their staff. Rural water utilities are often caught between their mission to provide clean, safe drinking water, and a lack of resources. These rural water providers are often staffed by dedicated volunteers that must act as board of directors, superintendent, meter readers, office and maintenance staff. When problems arise, these systems lack the technical, professional and financial resources to fulfill their mission. The Maine Rural Water Association helps small systems by providing on-site assistance, help with securing grants, development of source water protection plans and outreach and education for children. In 2004 the association visited 482 systems, helping them resolve a total of 586 water quality violations. The association also provided multiple training classes with 2,951 attendees representing 1376 systems. With only 2,200 public systems in Maine, the association reached two-thirds of the regulated community. This past year the association garnered more than \$2.2 million in federal funding for six public water systems.

**Environmental, Community, Academia & Non-Profit
Organization Environmental Merit Award:**

**Memorial Middle School - Safe and Healthy Schools Team - EMS Pilot
Project:**

**Kevin Perkins, Dave Brochu, Norm Anderson, Brant Miller, Susan
Pendleton, Susan Comyns, Stephen Morneault, John Hebert, Madeline
Akeley, Ginny Mott**

Like many schools in New England, Memorial Middle School faces a wide range of environmental, health and safety issues. The South Portland experience began with a vision of bringing together educators, health professionals and environmental regulators to pilot a comprehensive approach to managing environmental, health and safety issues by creating an Environmental Management System (EMS). Through a two-year EPA grant, South Portland's EMS team helped the school develop a basic framework, and, in partnership with National Institution for Occupational Safety and Health, applied it to an indoor air quality problem at the school. School personnel identified the source of a mold problem, which was the cause of staff complaints, and developed a process to resolve the problem. The project involved collaboration with a team assembled by the American Lung Association of Maine. Memorial Middle School has shared its experiences internally through training meetings and newsletters to parents, and externally, through participation in the American Lung Association's Safe and Healthy Schools network, at a regional symposium, and on the schools' web site. In the end, the team found that the documentation created through developing an EMS is not as important as the journey that was taken to change the way the school manages environmental concerns.

**Business, Industry and Professional Organizations
Environmental Merit Award:**

Berman Associates

Portland, Maine

Berman Associates is not your average real estate development company. Long before smart growth became a buzzword, Berman Associates was building projects that differed from the norm. Instead of building suburban

sprawl on greenfields, Berman Associates built projects that reused land in urban areas, that included affordable housing, and that included neighborhood consultations. They built one of the first affordable housing projects in a brownfields area in New England, Unity Village in Portland, Maine. Over the past year, Berman has been working on Brick Hill, a mixed-use development on the site of a former youth center in South Portland. Berman's projects, including Brick Hill, are collaborations with the neighborhood as well as the city and the state. In addition, Richard Berman actively shares his knowledge and experience with other developers, planners, and agencies. Spreading the word not only about why smart growth is better, but also about how it has to be approached differently, is vitally important because developers listen to what other developers say. These projects take stamina, patience, and creativity. Berman Associates is a pioneer, and invaluable role model.

Business, Industry and Professional Organizations Environmental Merit Award:

Nordx Company

Scarborough, Maine

Nordx Company, a 450-employee medical laboratory that supports the Maine Medical Center, has been more than just complying with environmental laws for several years. As a member of the Maine DEP Step Up program, Nordx has done a compliance inspection and corrected any violations found. Nordx was the first company to join the Maine Governor's Carbon Challenge, committing to reduce its impact on the environment, including reducing fossil fuel consumption and associated emissions by 10 percent by 2006. Nordx has also committed to eliminating mercury from the facility by 2005. It has reduced its generation of hazardous waste by 20 percent and is also focusing on solid waste, recycling cardboard, and paper. What sets Nordx apart from other good facilities is its desire to mentor. When the Nordx EH&S manager gets a call from another lab, she drops everything to spend a day showing them how to dispose of hazardous waste, and implement programs that Nordx has. This dedication to the environment and commitment from top management earns Nordx an Environmental Merit Award.

METADATA

1. TITLE: Seven Maine Groups Receive Environmental Awards
2. ABSTRACT: (Boston - May 17, 2005) Seven Maine groups were honored today in Boston's Faneuil Hall as EPA presented the 2005 Environmental Merit Awards. Recognizing significant contributions to environmental awareness and problem solving, the Maine awardees included two for business, industry and professional organizations, two for efforts by local, state or federal governments and three for work by environmental/community/academia/non-profit organizations.
3. PURPOSE: Public Information
4. ORIGINATOR: Regional Administrator's Office
5. PUBLICATION DATE:
6. ACCESS CONSTRAINTS: N/A
7. AVAILABILITY: N/A
 - a. Distributor:
 - b. Order Process:
 - c. Technical Prerequisites:
 - d. Automated Linkage:

e. Downloadable Files:

8. COVERAGE: N/A
9. TIME PERIOD OF COVERAGE: N/A
10. POINT OF CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:
David Deegan
Office of Public Affairs
EPA New England
1 Congress Street, Suite 1100 (RAA)
Boston, MA 02114-2023
(617) 918-1017
11. RESPONSIBLE PARTY:
David Deegan, (617) 918-1017
Office of Public Affairs
12. DATE OF CREATION: 5/17/05
13. AGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION: N/A
14. EXPIRATION DATE: 6/17/05

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Last updated on Tuesday, February 28th, 2006
URL: <http://www.epa.gov/Region1/pr/2005/may/dd050516.html>