



**News Release  
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## **SOUTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE FEDERATION RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING CONSERVATIONISTS**

COLUMBIA – For 50 years, the South Carolina Wildlife Federation (SCWF) has presented Conservation Awards to individuals and organizations who have played a major role in conserving South Carolina’s natural resources for future generations. Awards will be presented at the non-profit organization’s 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration and annual fundraiser on July 23<sup>rd</sup> in Columbia.

**The Conservationist of the Year Award will be presented to “Stop Offshore Drilling in the Atlantic (SODA)”** for its tremendous efforts to halt opening up the South Atlantic to offshore oil and gas exploration/development. Beginning with a few concerned Pawleys Island citizens, SODA became a force of hundreds with chapters forming in several areas along the coast. The organization was volunteer-only and comprised of an energetic, knowledgeable and experienced cast that included petroleum engineers, political and governmental professionals, retired federal agency scientists, economists, and biologists. SODA was involved in every form of opposition imaginable – recruitment of businesses, contacting city councils and attending their meetings, personal communications with other local officials including US Congressmen, attendance at federal agency forums, creation of media and op-ed opportunities and direct rebuttal of inflated economic claims from the oil and gas industry Hired Guns.

In the words of Ben Gregg, Executive Director of the SC Wildlife Federation, “SODA was on the front lines and became the most visible face of broad opposition to the oil and gas industry entering South Carolina. There was no task that SODA was not willing to handle and it was always handled professionally and with passion. It was an amazing illustration of what organic grassroots activism is all about, and for those who worked with SODA, it was inspiring.”

In March of this year, Secretary of the Interior Jewell announced that all states in the South Atlantic were being removed from consideration for offshore oil/gas development. SODA is being recognized for its vital role in reversing a bureaucratic decision in the face of daunting odds. Indeed, devoted citizens can make a big difference through persistence and determination.

**Dutch Fork Elementary School, Academy of Environmental Sciences, is receiving the Education Award.** This public school in Irmo offers a comprehensive inquiry-based, hands-on program which is focused on the natural environment and immerses children in learning based on discovery and exploration, collaborative study, scientific research, use of scientific tools and technology, and a strong sense of community. A resident scientist helps teachers to integrate and apply the environmental sciences across the curriculum in reading, math, social studies, writing, and the arts. Community partnerships provide students with multiple opportunities each year to participate in field studies at parks and natural areas across South Carolina. Environmental projects at the school include: Certified Schoolyard Habitat garden, greenhouse & raised bed vegetable/herb gardens, nature trail with outdoor classroom deck, observation beehive in the media center, indoor vermicomposting, outdoor

traditional composting, tagging of storm drains, live plants in the classroom to increase air quality, an awareness campaign to reduce car idling in the parking lot, school-wide recycling, replacement of incandescent lights with CFLs, and florescent light disposal. All students learn about their impact on our environment, and how to affect positive change in their community.

**The Habitat Conservationist Award goes to the board of the Rocky River Conservancy.** The Rocky River is an urban waterway that flows 50 miles through Anderson County. The approximate 400 surrounding acres of mostly wetlands is all within the City limits of Anderson SC. This Rocky River Swamp (RRS) has a long history of degradation and abuse including channelization of the river in the 1980s and subsequent degradation of adjacent wetlands. The Rocky River Conservancy is an association of organizations and individuals who are working to restore, protect and revitalize this River and its associated wetlands. The keystone for this effort is the creation of a Nature Park on the portion of the property owned by Anderson University for the enjoyment of all local area students (particularly Anderson University students), residents and visitors to the area. An outdoor laboratory and a Discovery Center are envisioned for use in the future by many students. This group of citizens has worked to restore and protect the “Rocky River Swamp,” collaborating to acquire land, secure grant money, plan events, and build a Nature Park for the benefit of recreation, tourism and economic development in this downtown swamp.

**The Advocacy Award is presented to Charles Rowe, editorial page editor of the Post and Courier newspaper.** For the past 20 years, Mr. Rowe has undertaken editorial campaigns supporting a wide range of preservation issues and public policy decisions related to land use and zoning, highway reform and mass transit, as well as the growth of utility systems that are necessary for development. His editorial efforts have contributed to the preservation of rural land and coastal habitat, as well as many local landmarks including the Angel Oak and Morris Island Lighthouse. Editorials against factory hog farming played an important role in the state legislature’s rejection of greatly expanding the state’s swine industry. He campaigned on behalf of Charleston County’s greenbelt program, which has used a local option sales tax approved by public referendum to preserve more than 20,000 acres. Similarly, the Post and Courier has regularly prodded legislators to provide adequate support for the State Conservation Bank. A two-year editorial campaign in the Post and Courier helped spur public opposition to offshore oil drilling that was instrumental in the 2016 decision by the Obama administration to halt that ill-considered plan. Strong editorial support provided by The Post and Courier and its editor have made an important difference in keeping forest and farm land from being turned into resort and residential development.

**All four of these Conservation Awards will be presented on Saturday, July 23, 2016 at the Wild Summer’s Night Auction & Wild Game Feast at Seawell’s in Columbia.** This event is SCWF’s largest fundraiser of the year, and includes live & silent auctions, prize drawings, and an open bar. The Wild Game Feast includes venison, quail, alligator, duck, shrimp, catfish and more! This year’s event will be a celebration of SCWF’s 85<sup>th</sup> birthday and will feature a plastics reduction pilot project. Tickets are available at [www.scwf.org](http://www.scwf.org) or by calling (803) 256-0670.

The Mission of the South Carolina Wildlife Federation is to conserve and restore South Carolina’s wildlife and wildlife habitat through education and advocacy. More information can be obtained about the organization by visiting [www.scwf.org](http://www.scwf.org) or calling (803) 256-0670.

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SOUTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE FEDERATION

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