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**NOAA Honors Leader of New Hampshire Estuarine Reserve
With Dr. Nancy Foster Award**

NOAA's Fisheries Service chief science adviser Steven A. Murawski today presented the 2008 Dr. Nancy Foster Habitat Conservation Award to Peter Wellenberger, manager of the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, for his three decades of commitment to stewardship, research and outreach concerning our nation's estuaries.

Wellenberger, who helped establish the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Greenland, N.H. and has been its manager since 1990, received the award at the American Fisheries Society annual meeting in Ottawa, Canada.

"Peter Wellenberger was an advocate for the Great Bay Estuary while still in college and he has grown into a national leader for research and stewardship of estuaries," said James Balsiger, acting NOAA assistant administrator for NOAA's Fisheries Service. "His commitment to conserving habitat for fish, birds, and other wildlife in these rich areas where salt and freshwater mix is in keeping with the outstanding example set by Dr. Nancy Foster in her 23 years at NOAA."

Wellenberger worked to protect the Great Bay estuary while still an undergraduate at the University of New Hampshire in the 1970s, and was then part of a citizen group that urged the bay be designated as a national estuarine research reserve, which occurred in 1989. He became the first manager of the reserve in 1990.

He has helped expand the reserve of salt marsh, freshwater wetlands, mudflats, upland forest and coastal rivers from 6,353 acres to 10,235 acres. He also started the Great Bay Stewards, a volunteer group with more than 300 members who work on behalf of the reserve. At the national level, Wellenberger helped develop a strategy for land acquisition for the National Estuarine Research Reserve System and serves as a leader with the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association.

NOAA's Fisheries Service established the Dr. Nancy Foster Award was in 1997 to recognize leaders in habitat conservation. The first award was presented in 1997 to Dr. Foster, who was instrumental throughout her career with NOAA in protecting, conserving and restoring threatened habitats for living marine resources. Under her direction, NOAA created the Office of Habitat Conservation and the NOAA Restoration Center to focus on protecting and restoring the nation's coastal and marine habitat. She established the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, which has pioneered ecosystem management to restore the nation's largest estuary. Dr. Foster served as a visionary leader at NOAA until her death in 2000. The award in her honor has been presented eight times since 1997.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.

On the Web:

Nancy Foster Award for Habitat Conservation:
<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/habitatconservation/nancyfoster/>

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