



2015 Carl Weber Award – Frank W. Dawson III

Frank Dawson has a passion for protecting the environment. Frank's life work has exemplified collaboration, service and a relentless drive to provide the best science possible to make management decisions. Frank's life work was with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, where he began his career in 1982. But he also volunteered his free time to protecting his beloved waterways.

Frank founded the Friends of College Creek in the mid 1990's. Throughout Frank's life, he was always thinking of ways to restore our precious resources, change people's attitudes and behavior towards conservation and involve as many of Maryland's citizens and community leaders in our protection efforts as time allowed. In founding the Friends of College Creek, he intuitively knew that the African American community on the banks of the creek and on the doorstep of our agency was not benefiting from outreach and projects and went into the community to make a difference. He thrived at volunteering, whether doing community projects to plant trees or shoreline restoration plantings, and especially sought out opportunities to engage children.

Frank's 33+ years of State service at DNR, including Deputy Secretary; Assistant Secretary, Aquatic Resources; Acting Assistant Secretary, Chesapeake Bay Programs; Director, Watershed Services Center; Director, Watershed Resource Restoration Division; Chief, Tidal Wetlands Division; and Chair of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Living Resources Subcommittee, provided him the opportunity to shape Bay watershed policy, integrate State, local and federal Governments, watershed group, academia, and private sector endeavors to protect and restore our most precious resources. At every level at DNR, Frank was a mentor, facilitator, innovator, and problem solver.

During budget reduction exercises for the Department, Frank would bring together all his Unit Directors where they were encouraged to think outside the

box and evaluate alternative funding sources, especially when it meant the protection of DNR's long-term monitoring efforts.

In Frank's leadership roles at DNR, he worked with local governments, non-profits and citizens to implement Maryland 10 Tributary Strategy Plans. He later led efforts to develop and implement Maryland Watershed Implementation Plans as Chair of the multi-agency Chesapeake Bay Workgroup advising the Governor's Bay Cabinet.

As Chair of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Living Resource Subcommittee, a multi-jurisdictional subcommittee charged with developing and implementing agreements on living resource issues across the Chesapeake Bay. He was also instrumental in incorporating significant living resources and habitat commitments into the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement and adopted a "no net loss policy" for wetlands.

Frank never shied away from work or controversy and is well respected by the Chesapeake Bay community. In 2009-2010, Frank fought for maintaining the comprehensive long-term Chesapeake Bay Monitoring Program from Program reductions. Frank understood the importance of rigorous water quality monitoring. Long-term monitoring provides the basis for understanding or ecosystem processes, characterizing existing conditions and assessing change/progress due to our management strategies. His insistence on maintaining the Chesapeake Bay Monitoring Program intact led to minimal reductions. DNR's Chesapeake Bay Monitoring Program continues to be the foundation for the Bay Program's TMDL

Communication and collaboration are Frank's strongest qualities. Frank's tenure at DNR spanned all the Chesapeake Bay Agreements, from the original CB 1983 Agreement, the 1987 Agreement, the Chesapeake 2000 Agreement and the 2010 Chesapeake Bay TMDL. He was one of the major driving forces in negotiating and helping to author the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. This agreement included signatories from each of the 6 watershed States and set 10 interrelated goals and 29 management strategies that work toward enhancing the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries and the

surrounding watershed. It took over 2 years to get consensus on all the various components and language that became foundation for the new agreement. Frank, along with former Secretary Joe Gill, made it their priority to get all States to sign on to the Agreement. This meant traveling to, and meeting with, top agency heads from each State in order to work through all the differences and concerns. The agreement included input from citizens, academic institutions, local governments and other stakeholders that formed the inclusive, goal-oriented document that addresses watershed, water quality, habitat, and living resource issues along with environmental literacy and stewardship.

Frank was heard to remark on several occasions that this was in fact the most meaningful work of his career.