

Stockton Professor George Zimmermann Receives Governor's Environmental Excellence Award

For Immediate Release; photo attached, caption below

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Galloway, N.J. - George Zimmermann, a professor of Environmental Studies at Stockton University, on Wednesday was honored with the 2016 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award (GEEA) in the Healthy Ecosystems category.

Zimmerman was the lead campus proponent for the university's Forest Management Plan, passed by New Jersey Pineland's Commission in 2013, the first comprehensive forest management plan for public land within the Pinelands region. The plan is a model of forestland management for the state.

"This award is not just for me - it's really on behalf the whole university and the community," said Zimmermann. "It takes more than one person to do all this - the administration, the students who have been working tirelessly, the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection, the Forest Fire Service which has given us a grant, and recently Fish and Wildlife gave us money to put in fences to keep deer out of some areas. That's just part of a series of experiments we're doing. There are a lot of people for whom I am really accepting this award."

The plan was initiated to bring together over 40 years of research and management initiatives by the Environmental Sciences program and the office of Facilities and Construction at Stockton. In addition to a blueprint for wise use of the Stockton forests, the plan is a working document to transform the forests into a living and learning laboratory and demonstration site for development and implementation of sound, sustainable forestry practices in the Pinelands.

"Dr. Zimmermann, an expert on the Atlantic white cedar, has been a statewide advocate of healthy ecosystems and ecological forest management for over 30 years of teaching and research on the New Jersey Pine Barrens," said President Harvey Kesselman. "He has served on the Pinelands Forestry Advisory committee and regularly contributes expert guidance to the N.J. Pinelands Commission and to the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection. We are extremely pleased that his valuable work has been recognized by the Governor's Award."

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Zimmerman was among 12 honorees statewide at the 17th Annual Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards ceremony held at the New Jersey States Museum in Trenton. The state's premier environmental awards program recognizes outstanding environmental performance, programs and projects in New Jersey.

"This year's winners have demonstrated true leadership in finding ways to enhance New Jersey's environment," DEP Commissioner Bob Martin said. "Through their collaborations and dedication, these honorees are setting high standards and excellent examples of how everyone in our state can help the environment through partnerships and commitment. As stewards of New Jersey's environment, we salute the outstanding contributions of this year's winners."

Stockton students in Environmental Science, one of the nation's first such programs, are studying the effects of prescribed burns being conducted by John Sanford, DEP's local fire warden, and DEP fire crews. Students, along with Zimmerman and other faculty members, have collaborated with experts from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) William J. Hughes Technical Center to capture three-dimensional imagery of the forest before and after the prescribed burn using a LiDAR laser scanner. This state-of-the-art laser technology replaces some manual measurements that would have taken weeks or even months to gather.

"Dr. George Zimmerman typifies the teacher-scholar that makes a Stockton education so valuable," said Peter Straub, dean of the School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics (NAMS). "Dr. Zimmermann, working with forester Bob Williams, provided a valuable service to the university in producing the forest plan and an outstanding learning experience for our students."

Stockton University and Zimmermann also have hosted a number of groups including the U.S.D.A. Forest Service's North Atlantic Fire Science Exchange, the Pinelands Short Course sponsored by the Pinelands Commission and numerous talks and conference presentations on the forest management plan and its forestry initiatives.

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Photo provided by:

N.J. Department of Environmental Protection

Caption:

George Zimmermann, second from left, a professor of Environmental Studies at Stockton University, was honored with the 2016 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award (GEEA) in the Healthy Ecosystems category on Dec. 7. He is shown with Dean Peter Straub of Stockton's School of Natural Sciences and Mathematics, left, DEP Commissioner Bob Martin, second from right, and Executive Director David Zimmer of the N. J. Environmental Infrastructure Trust.