

The George B. Hartzog, Jr. Environmental Awards Program

2026



**INSTITUTE
FOR PARKS**

HARTZOG THE MAN

1920 - 2008



Often called “America’s Greatest Idea,” our national park system protects and showcases our most important natural, cultural, and historical resources. Yosemite, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, and Great Smoky Mountains are easily recognizable names to most Americans. Muir, Mather, Albright, Hartzog are not so recognized. Generally, the parks are known, but not the people behind them.

Indeed, our system of national parks were established and perpetuated as a result of the efforts and ingenuity of a select group of individuals. These individuals are as significant to the cultural well-being of this country as any of those persons more recognizable in our history texts.

George B. Hartzog, Jr. was one such “man behind the scenery.” As the seventh Director of the National Park Service from 1964 to 1973, his administration led the largest expansion of the national park system, adding 72 units. The many accomplishments of the “Hartzog Years” include:

- Initiated an Amendment to the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 reserving 80 million acres of State and Native Interest Lands for possible inclusion in national park, forest, wildlife refuge, and wild and scenic rivers systems. From these and other lands, Congress in 1980 more than doubled the size of the national park system, adding more than 43 million acres.
- Instrumental in the development and passage of: The Wilderness Act; The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act; the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act; and the National Trails System Act.
- Developed recruitment, training, and promotion initiatives for women, minorities, and Native Americans in national park management programs.
- Created the Volunteers in Parks (VIP) program. Volunteers currently outnumber full-time employees and many services could not be provided without these individuals.
- Initiated the “Bring Parks to People” urban park programs; “Summer in the Parks” and “Parks for All Seasons” youth programs in partnership with public schools, local governments and citizen organizations; “Living History” programs that link generation to generation; and “Environmental Education Landmarks” curricula to foster a sense of community in our society.

Director Hartzog is listed in Who’s Who in America, Who’s Who in the World, and profiled in Exemplary Public Administrators, Character and Leadership in Government. The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, Missouri houses the George B. Hartzog, Jr. Visitor Center.

After leaving government service, he continued to provide leadership as Director (1973–1998), President, and Chairman (1995-1998) of the White House Historical Association, Chairman of the Trustees of the White House Endowment Trust (1998–2004), the Wolf Trap Associates (Chairman), National Trust for Historic Preservation, and numerous other cultural and environmental groups. His legacy may be best summarized by the Secretary of the Interior’s Advisory Board:

“There will never come an end to the good he has done.”



THE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS PROGRAM

THE BENTON H. BOX AWARD

The Award is named in appreciation of Dr. Box's distinguished career as an educator/ administrator, especially as Dean of the College of Forest and Recreation Resources at Clemson University, which he led to national and international recognition for academic excellence and for leadership in fostering innovation in resource management. The Award recognizes the teacher who by precept and example inspires in students the quest for knowledge; or the administrator who fosters a learning environment and encourages curriculum innovation to inculcate an "environmental ethic" as the rule of conduct involving resource management, development and utilization; or the private practitioner whose management over a sustained period demonstrates leadership in preserving, enhancing, renewing and restoring a livable environment.

Benton H. Box Award

is presented to

Jeffrey L. Marion, Ph.D.

**U.S. Geological Service and Professor, Virginia Tech
*for leadership in preserving our natural environment and inspiring
in students the quest for knowledge and
an environmental ethic.***

Dr. Jeffrey Marion recently retired from a 39-year career with the National Park Service and U.S. Geological Survey, he continues as an Adjunct Professor at Virginia Tech University. He cofounded and is a leading author in the Recreation Ecology field of study, which investigates the environmental impacts of visitor use in protected natural areas such as parks and wilderness.

His studies have focused on recreation impacts to vegetation, soil, and wildlife, the sustainable management of trails, recreation sites, and campsites, and the development and efficacy of Leave No Trace low impact practices. He was a founding member of the Leave No Trace Board of Directors and for its first decade chaired the committee that developed and refined low impact principles, practices, educational literature, and courses. In 2014 he authored their official book “Leave No Trace in the Outdoors” and is currently working on a revised edition and three open-source technical books. He is a recipient of the Department of Interior’s highest Distinguished Service Award and the George Wright Society Natural Resources Achievement Award.

He is a lifelong outdoor recreationist who has completed the Appalachian Trail and is now section-hiking the Pacific Crest Trail. He has been a Scoutmaster (5 yrs) and co-ed Venture Crew Leader (18 yrs) and has long worked with scouting professionals to incorporate Leave No Trace into the scouting Handbook, Fieldbook, courses, and outdoor practices. For this work he is the recipient of the scouting community’s highest conservation awards, the Hornaday Gold Medal and Gold Badge, and the Distinguished Staff Alumni Award from Philmont Scout Ranch.

THE DWIGHT A. HOLDER AWARD

The Award is named in honor of Mr. Holder's illustrious career as an entrepreneur and public servant. As Chairman of the South Carolina Parks, Recreation and Tourism Commission he led South Carolina's parks into a new era of service to the people of South Carolina and the nation. The Award recognizes outstanding work by doctoral graduates from the Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management and the Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation; a member of either Department’s faculty for original research, scholarly writing, and innovative and inspired teaching; the faculty adviser and graduate student as a team, for initiatives that foster understanding of and provide new insights into the promotion, management, wise use and enjoyment of South Carolina's natural and cultural heritage in perpetuity; and distinguished academic leadership by a member of either Department’s faculty and staff.

**The Dwight A. Holder Award
is presented to**

Matthew T.J. Brownlee, Ph.D.

Professor, Clemson University

*for outstanding work and sustained achievement that foster understanding,
wise use, and conservation of natural and cultural resources.*

Dr. Brownlee is a Professor of Parks, Conservation, and Outdoor Recreation in the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management with a joint appointment in the Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation. Dr. Brownlee earned a Ph.D. in Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management from Clemson University in 2012, emphasizing parks and conservation area management with advanced training in applied social science methods and statistical measurement. He also holds an M.S. in Outdoor Recreation Administration from Aurora University, complemented by additional coursework in statistics from the University of Kentucky, a B.S. in Outdoor Education from Northland College, and a National Outdoor Leadership School semester in East Africa featuring mountaineering, desert travel, sailing, and cultural studies.

Dr. Brownlee's interdisciplinary research links outdoor recreation, park planning, and resource management. His applied research supplies information to help park and protected area professionals and natural resource managers characterize and evaluate human-nature interactions including a) park visitor behavior, visitation estimation, and visitor capacity, b) people's interactions with and attachments to climate-sensitive and climate-impacted environments, and c) linkages within dynamic environmental-social systems. Dr. Brownlee specializes in research design and analytical methods, specifically related to applied social science research in parks and protected areas. He often uses methods that transcend traditional concentration areas and degrees, including advanced quantitative modeling, experience sampling, social network analysis, cognitive mapping, GPS tracking, GIS applications, participant-employed photography, and photo elicitation.

Dr. Brownlee has expertise in methods related to the Interagency Visitor Use Management Framework. He also holds a Part 107 Remote Pilot Certificate (Unmanned Aerial System; Drones) from the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration with specialized training in photogrammetry and thermography. Matt has current or past projects with several federal and state agencies, including the U.S. National Park Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, U.S.D.A. Forest Service, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and various State Park agencies. These projects involve addressing complex management issues across diverse protected areas. Internationally, Matt has conducted and supervised research in Colombia with Parques Nacionales Naturales, in Argentina with Administracion de Parques Nacionales, and in the Pangolakha landscape in India with the Global Tiger Forum. Dr. Brownlee's research has been funded by the National Science Foundation, federal and state land management agencies, and private foundations, generating \$4.6 million research dollars. Dr. Brownlee has presented or co-presented such work more than 150 times at international and regional conferences. He has also authored or co-authored more than 120 peer-reviewed journal articles and technical reports with over 1,900 citations.

One of Matt's greatest joys is working closely with graduate and undergraduate students through applied research. During this process, Matt and his students work collaboratively to address a critical management need in addition to unanswered academic questions. His contribution to training the next generation of scientists and natural resource stewards has been substantial, chairing 11 doctoral students and 17 masters students since 2013, while serving on over 40 graduate committees at Clemson University, the University of Utah, Kansas State University, the University of Maine, and the University of Tennessee.

When not conducting research or teaching in beautiful Clemson, South Carolina, Matt loves spending time with his wife and his two children. Matt enjoys camping, hunting, fishing, traveling, and community events, including, of course, Clemson University Football.

THE WALTER T. COX AWARD

The Award is named in appreciation of Dr. Cox's distinguished career in education and public service, especially his tenure as President of Clemson University and as the Director of the Santee-Cooper Authority. The Award recognizes sustained achievement in public service on the firing line, where the public interest meets the private interest in public policy formulation and administration; distinguished leadership and support of innovation in conflict resolution of policy initiatives that enhance the quality of life; personal achievements during a career or in a specific episode that provides inspiration and leadership to others in serving the above purposes.

The Walter T. Cox Award

is presented to

Kurt J. Repanshek

Journalist

for sustained achievement in public service, providing leadership in the administration of public lands, and for policy formation affecting our natural and cultural resources.

From boyhood roots in New Jersey wondering about a place called Yellowstone to standing atop the Grand Teton years later, Kurt Repanshek's connection to national parks has lasted a lifetime.

A respected award-winning journalist well versed in public lands, wildlife, recreation, and environmental issues, Kurt has never been far from national parks. His parents introduced him early on to Acadia, Shenandoah, and Great Smoky Mountains national parks, and in college he was a river guide on the New River before it was added to the National Park System. Professionally, his 14-year career with The Associated Press took him to Wyoming, where he ran the news cooperative's state office and became deeply involved in covering Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks. A key aspect of that coverage included reporting from Yellowstone during the hot, fiery summer of 1988.

While Kurt left the AP in 1993, he didn't leave the national parks. As a freelance writer based in Park City, Utah, he authored hundreds of articles involving Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Great Smoky, Grand Canyon, Arches, Canyonlands, Zion, Bryce Canyon and Capitol Reef, and wrote both America's National Parks for Dummies and National Parks with Kids.

The summer of 2005 saw the launch of the National Parks Traveler website, which Kurt started as a means of finding stories to pitch to magazines only to see it evolve into a stand-alone national publication covering national parks and protected places. From just 400 readers during its first week online, the Traveler's traffic has grown to more than 4.5 million readers and listeners.

An offshoot of the Traveler came in 2018, when Kurt turned a series of Traveler articles on brucellosis in Yellowstone into *Rebisoning The West: Restoring An American Icon to the Landscape*. The book, which won a bronze award in the Ecology and Environment category from Foreword Indies, examines efforts to both preserve bison genetic purity and return "conservation" herds of the animals to more locations in the West and Midwest.

Kurt's articles have appeared in Smithsonian Magazine, National Audubon, National Wildlife, Hemispheres Magazine, National Geographic Traveler, National Geographic's online publication, Discover Magazine, American Archaeology, American Express Executive Traveler, as well as in online sites and publications from the National Park Foundation, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sports Illustrated, and others. He's also been interviewed as a national park expert by USA Today, Pauline Frommer, CNN's Brian Stelter, and other national media outlets. The Traveler's weekly podcast was cited in 2025 as one of the top 100 in the world by Listen Notes, an industry tracker.

In 2019 Kurt was honored by the Western National Parks Association with its Stewart L. Udall Award; in 2017 the Coalition to Protect America's National Parks recognized him with its 2017 George B. Hartzog, Jr. Award; and in 2015 the George Wright Society presented him with its Communications Award.

In 2008, he landed a two-week fellowship at the Bill Lane Center for the American West at Stanford University to report on climate change and the national parks.

When not at the keyboard, Kurt and his wife, Marcelle, enjoy exploring national parks throughout the seasons.

THE WILLIAM C. EVERHART AWARD

The Award is named in appreciation of the distinguished career of Bill Everhart as field interpreter, researcher, administrator, author, and creator of the National Park Service's Harpers Ferry Center for creative design and communication, which has received national and international recognition for excellence. The Award recognizes sustained achievements during a career or in a specific episode that illuminate, provide creative insights to, and that foster an appreciation of our natural and cultural heritage.

The William C. Everhart Award

is presented to

Thomas R. Medema

Former Associate Director of the National Park Service

for sustained achievements that illuminate, provide creative insights, and that foster an appreciation of our natural and cultural heritage.

A dedicated conservationist with over thirty-five years of experience, Tom Medema is a veteran leader of the National Park Service (NPS). His journey began in 1988 as a volunteer at Rocky Mountain National Park, driven by a deep passion for public lands. Over the course of his career, Tom has held pivotal roles at national parks across the country, including Denali, Cuyahoga Valley, Mount Rainier, Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, and Rocky Mountain. He also served as Chief of Interpretation and Education at Yosemite National Park, where he was deeply engaged in the local community—coaching the Yosemite Ski Team and supporting regional organizations.

Guiding National Impact through Vision and Service

In his most recent role, Tom served as Associate Director for Interpretation, Education, and Volunteers at the NPS. There, he shaped national programs that engaged millions of visitors annually, fostering deeper connections to America's natural and cultural heritage. His leadership emphasized inclusivity and accessibility, with a focus on inspiring people from all backgrounds to appreciate and protect public lands and share their own stories. He oversaw education, volunteer, and interpretive services across the system, playing a critical role in both program strategy and delivery.

Leading Beyond Public Service

Since retiring from federal service, Tom has continued his dedication to public land stewardship through his consulting firm, Medema Advising LLC. He partners with organizations to enhance visitor engagement, strengthen conservation initiatives, and advance mission-driven impact. He is currently a Special Advisor for America250, helping shape the 250th commemoration of the Declaration of Independence in 2026.

Global Commitment to Public Lands

Tom's passion for conservation extends around the globe. He has provided leadership and expertise in Chile, Argentina, Peru, Nepal, Mongolia, France, Hungary, and Saudi Arabia. He is also co-founder of Rally for Rangers, an adventure philanthropy initiative that delivers motorcycles and essential gear to park rangers in remote regions—empowering them to better protect the landscapes in their care. Tom co-produced the award-winning documentary *A Rally for Rangers*, which tells the story of this unique global effort.

Honoring a Legacy of Leadership and Service

In recognition of his enduring impact, Tom was honored with several prestigious awards for his visionary leadership and lifelong dedication to public lands. He received the Department of the Interior Distinguished Service Award, the highest honorary recognition from the Department, for his exceptional contributions to the NPS mission and public service.

He was also awarded the NPS Sequoia Award, celebrating his outstanding legacy in interpretation and education. Additional honors included the Edward B. Danson Award from Western National Parks and the President's Award from the National Association for Interpretation, acknowledging his exemplary service and influence in advancing the profession of interpretation nationwide.

A Lifelong Love for the Outdoors

Outside of work, Tom is an avid outdoor enthusiast and traveler. Whether exploring by mountain bike, road bike, or motorbike—or enjoying his lifelong passion for downhill skiing—he finds joy in the natural world. He spends much of his free time with family, exploring back roads, trails and waterways, always preparing for his next adventure.

THE FRAN P. MAINELLA AWARD

The Fran P. Award is named in appreciation of the dynamic career of Fran Mainella as the first woman Director of the National Park Service. As Director, she focused some of her many efforts on creating systems of connected parks and developing innovative partnerships to expand services. Director Mainella was previously the Director of the Florida State Park Service and the Executive Director of the Florida Recreation and Park Association. The Award recognizes sustained and innovative achievement by a woman in the management of North America's natural, historic or cultural heritage.

**The Fran P. Mainella Award
is presented to**

Lisa Mendelson-Ielmini

Deputy Regional Director, National Capital Region, National Park
Service

***for sustained and innovative achievement by a woman in the
management of North America's natural, historic or cultural heritage.***

For more than three decades, Lisa A. Mendelson-Ielmini has advanced the stewardship of the nation's natural, historic, and cultural heritage through distinguished leadership in the National Park Service and other federal agencies.

As Deputy Regional Director for the National Capital Region, she shares executive responsibility for 40 park units across Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia — a complex portfolio of memorials, historic sites, parkways, and urban natural landscapes welcoming over 50 million visitors annually.

Since joining the National Park Service in 1997 as a partnership specialist, public information officer, and park planner, Ms. Mendelson-Ielmini has held progressively senior positions across park, regional, and national offices, including repeated service as Acting Regional Director, Superintendent of National Mall and Memorial Parks, Chief of Staff to the NPS Director, and Deputy Superintendent of Yosemite National Park.

Her work has integrated resource protection with public access during nationally significant events and complex operations, including presidential inaugurations, large-scale public gatherings, and emergency response. She has advanced collaborative approaches that align preservation, visitor use, and operational continuity in highly visible and sensitive settings. Additional assignments include the FY98 appropriations cycle on the Senate Appropriations staff and serving as a Department of the Interior desk officer at the Office of Management and Budget.

She emphasizes collaboration, practical problem-solving, and provides steady leadership in highly visible settings. She has invested deeply in people — mentoring staff and leaders, strengthening partnerships, and improving organizational practices that sustain both park resources and the workforce that cares for them.

She holds a Master of Land Use Planning from the University of Virginia, a Bachelor of Arts in Business Management from Washington College, and is a certified member of the American Institute of Certified Planners. Since 1993 Lisa has volunteered and lead hands-on service projects in national parks, reinforcing her lifelong commitment to conservation and stewardship.

He began his career with The National Park Service on The National Mall, in his hometown, but soon found himself stationed at Prince William Forest Park in Triangle, Virginia, Bent's Old Fort in Southwestern Colorado and Fort Davis in West Texas. Over time, he also served as Chief Ranger at Bent's Old Fort, Site Manager at the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site and Superintendent at the Booker T. Washington National Monument in Virginia.

The Institute for Parks

The Clemson University Institute for Parks (CUIP) provides research, education, training, and outreach that enhances the management of the world's parks and protected areas. It accomplishes this by providing park and protected area managers with innovative research to support science-based decision-making; and by developing current and future leaders in the park movement by providing interdisciplinary and transformative education and training programs. Currently the CUIP has over 35 Clemson University Faculty affiliates (Fellows) from 4 colleges. For more information, see www.Clemson.edu/cuip

The Hartzog Fund

The Hartzog Fund began in 1978 when colleague William C. Everhart, through a gift to Clemson University, sought to honor George B. Hartzog, Jr. the seventh Director of the National Park Service. The Fund allows the Institute for Parks and the Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Management to sponsor two annual activities and one graduate student fellowship. The Hartzog Lecture Series supports an annual presentation by leading figures in the field of conservation. In addition to the Hartzog Lecture Series, the Institute for Parks hosts the annual Hartzog Awards Luncheon and gives six awards to individuals for exemplary leadership in addressing environmental issues and concerns. The Hartzog Graduate Student Fellowship began in 2003 and supports a graduate student doing research in parks associated with the National Park Service.

Please help us promote excellence in park management and conservation by making your donation to the Clemson University Foundation – Hartzog Fund and mail to:

Clemson University Foundation, c/o Donna Incropera Dant
Clemson University, 110 Daniel Dr., Clemson, SC 29631-1520



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