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Resource Managers Receive State's Highest Environmental Honor

~ Governor and Cabinet recognize resource managers for dedication to Florida's environment ~

April 13, 2010

TALLAHASSEE – Gov. Charlie Crist and the Florida Cabinet today signed three resolutions sponsored by Agriculture Commissioner Charles Bronson honoring recipients of the 2009 Florida Department of Environmental Protection Jim Stevenson Resource Manager of the Year Award, one of the state's highest environmental honors.

The three award recipients, Charlie Brown, Park Manager with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park, Nancy Dwyer, Lead Area Biologist for the Half Moon Wildlife Management Area with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and Ken Weber, Tallahassee Forestry Center Manager with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' (DACS) Division of Forestry, represent the state's leaders in natural resource management.

The recipients were recognized for the following accomplishments:

DEP: Charlie Brown has worked for the Florida Park Service for more than 29 years and currently serves as park manager for the 3rd largest Florida state park. Brown has made important contributions to the burn program at Kissimmee Prairie Preserve State Park in Okeechobee, and successfully completed prescribed burns on more than 33,000 of the park's 53,700 acres last fiscal year; that's roughly 41 percent of all habitats burned statewide by the park service as a whole and the most of any DEP property. Brown has demonstrated commitment to all aspects of ecosystem management, including exotic control, wildlife habitat assessment, and interpretation of the park's dynamic natural resources for visitors.

"The dedication these three award recipients have shown to effectively managing the state's valuable natural resources for future generations to enjoy is truly commendable," said DEP Secretary Michael W. Sole. "I am especially proud of DEP's own Charlie Brown, whose leadership, knowledge and sound management of sensitive state lands makes him a deserving recipient of this honor."

DACS: Ken Weber, with the Division of Forestry, has made a tremendous contribution to the prescribed burning programs at Tate's Hell State Forest, Wakulla State Forest and Lake Talquin State Lands, and has overseen more than 290,000 acres of prescribed burns at Tate's Hell State Forest alone. Mr. Weber supports public access to state forests by maintaining more than 1,000 miles of roads, 200 miles of trails, 81 campsites and hunting on 218,500 acres, which bring in more than 60,000 forest visitors annually and more than \$1.2 million in annual forest revenue.

"We are very proud of the work and dedication that Ken has consistently exhibited in the management of our state forests," Commissioner Bronson said. "All of the

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resource managers being honored today should be justifiably proud of their contributions in maintaining some of the most beautiful natural habitats in Florida.”

FWC: Nancy Dwyer is the lead area biologist at the 9,500-acre Half Moon Wildlife Management Area. Her effective leadership has resulted in well-managed wildlife management areas with sustainable wildlife populations. Dwyer has increased habitat restoration by partnering with other land management agencies to initiate a ground cover restoration project, which restored sandhill and scrubby flatwoods habitats at Half Moon. Dwyer also established an active scrub-jay survey and banding program, which led to the return of scrub-jays on areas previously inhabited. She has also played a large role in an effort to increase the red-cockaded woodpecker population.

“There is a great swell of pride throughout the entire Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission when the conservation community honors one of our distinguished scientists with an award like this,” said FWC Chairman Rodney Barreto. “It is an acknowledgement that the future of Florida’s natural treasures is in good hands.”

The Jim Stevenson Resource Manager of the Year was established by DEP in 1992 to recognize the employee who is judged to have made the most significant progress in the stewardship of state lands that are actively managed by DEP, DACS’ Division of Forestry and FWC. The award is selected by a committee of environmental professionals representing the Sierra Club, Florida Audubon Society and The Nature Conservancy. This is the first year the award has extended beyond DEP to include all three agencies.

For more information about DEP, visit www.dep.state.fl.us. For more information about FWC, visit MyFWC.com. For more information about DACS, visit www.doacs.state.fl.us.