

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Scott Richardson

207-646-4521 ext 114 | editor@laudholm.org | @wellsreserve

**WELLS RESERVE DIRECTOR PAUL DEST RECEIVES NATIONAL CONSERVATION AWARD**

WELLS, Maine, December 12, 2016 — Paul Dest, for 16 years the director of the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, was honored on December 12 with the 2016 Dr. Nancy Foster Habitat Conservation Award from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Dest was presented with his award at the National Summit on Coastal and Estuarine Restoration and 25th meeting of The Coastal Society in New Orleans.

Maine Senators Susan Collins and Angus King praised Dest for his dedication and leadership. “He and the entire team at the Wells Reserve are doing fantastic work to help study and conserve coastal ecosystems across Maine,” they said in a joint statement.

Nik Charov, chairman of the Wells Reserve Management Authority and president of Laudholm Trust, said “When it comes to habitat conservation in Northern New England, especially the great State of Maine, Paul is a trusted local partner working tirelessly behind the scenes.”

Dest has been involved in conservation for 30 years, both as a volunteer and professional. He is a founding member and ongoing participant in the 19,000-acre Mount Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative and the Wild and Scenic York River Project. He spearheaded the protection of important parcels that are now part of the Wells Reserve and assisted the Wells Conservation Commission in its acquisition of key lands along the Merriland River. Dest has served on numerous boards of directors and commissions over the years, including the Kennebunk Land Trust and the National Estuarine Research Reserve Association.

Before leading the Wells Reserve, Dest was instrumental in protecting and securing public access to coastal and riverine lands through his work at the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game, the Maine Coastal Program, and the Land for Maine’s Future Program.

Dest recently edited a three-volume guide on public access to the Maine coast and this year coordinated an update to Maine Sea Grant’s publication on coastal ownership law.

The Dr. Nancy Foster Habitat Conservation Award recognizes exceptional achievement and dedication to habitat conservation in the coastal and marine environment. Just 21 recipients have been honored with the award since its inception in 1997.

The Wells Reserve at Laudholm, Maine’s only National Estuarine Research Reserve, protects more than 2,200 acres for research, education, and enjoyment. More than 25,000 people visit the Wells Reserve each year to walk miles of trails, learn about coastal systems, and become inspired.

###