



NEWS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

November 6, 1998

Ken Burton 202-208-5657

FOUR U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE EMPLOYEES RECEIVE CHUCK YEAGER AWARD FOR COMMITMENT TO RESOURCES

Four current and former U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees, Pete Gober, Ralph Morgenweck, Ray Rauch, and John Spinks are recipients of the 1998 Chuck Yeager Award, given by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to fish and wildlife professionals who have made "an outstanding commitment to natural resources."

Named after Brig. Gen. Chuck Yeager (USAF, Ret.), the celebrated aviator and former member of the Foundation's board of directors, the Yeager Award includes a \$15,000 cash prize, to be awarded to the recipients' conservation cause of choice.

Gober, Morgenweck, Rauch, and Spinks asked that the \$15,000 go to the Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Society. The Society supports Service work at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal in Colorado, which is undergoing environmental clean-up before becoming one of the newest units of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

"These four men saw 27 square miles of land and more than 300 species of plants and animals, and they knew that, when the Army decided to close this facility, they had to make an effort to conserve these lands," said Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark. "They pushed, and they won, and so did the American people. They have my admiration as well as my congratulations."

The arsenal was originally used to manufacture chemical weapons and, following World War II, was operated under lease by several private industries, including Shell Oil, and used to manufacture agricultural chemicals.

Spinks, a retired deputy regional director for the Service and Gober, a former project leader at the arsenal and now coordinator of the Service's black-footed ferret recovery program, developed the original plan to convert the arsenal grounds to a wildlife refuge, a vision that led ultimately to Congress enacting the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge Act in 1992.

Rauch, a current project leader of the arsenal, and Morgenweck, director of the Service's Mountain-Prairie Region, developed a comprehensive management plan that protects the needs of wildlife, helped found the Rocky Mountain Arsenal Wildlife Society to help support wildlife activities, promoted development of public use programs, and developed education programs for metropolitan area school children.

"The Chuck Yeager Award seeks to recognize individuals who get the conservation job done on the ground," said Whitney Tilt, director of conservation programs for the Foundation. "That's the code the general has lived by and that's what the award seeks to recognize in others."

Tilt presented the award to the four men October 21 at the Service's recently concluded conference on the National Wildlife Refuge System, held in Keystone, Colorado.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 500 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Aid program that distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.