

### **2015 Realty Awards**

A hands-on Southeast Region realty specialist based in Florida, a wetland management district manager in Montana and non-governmental organization chapter in Montana are recipients of the 2015 National Realty Awards.

### **National Land Protection Award**

The Nature Conservancy of Montana received the National Land Protection Award for providing private funding, grassroots advocacy and political support for the Service's conservation easement initiative in the Crown of the Continent ecosystem.

The award is given to private citizens, groups, organizations, corporations, public agencies and their employees or volunteers outside the Service for contributions to land protection for fish and wildlife resources in partnership with the Service. TNC has helped conserve more than 1 million acres across Montana since 1976.

### **Dieffenbach Award**

Southeast Region realty specialist Susan Trokey received the Rudolph Dieffenbach Award, given to a Division of Realty employee for significant contributions to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's land acquisition systems, operation or mission.

Trokey, a 12-year veteran of the Service, was recognized for overseeing the addition of more than 19,500 acres to the National Wildlife Refuge System at 19 refuges since 2003, and for her personal approach to her work. Trokey, who is based at J.N. "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge in southwest Florida, is the lead senior realty specialist for the Everglades Headwaters National Wildlife Refuge and Conservation Area, which was established in 2012. The conservation area will restore and conserve a mosaic of habitats – seasonally wet grasslands, longleaf pine savannas and cattle ranches – that sustain one of the most important assemblages of imperiled vertebrate wildlife in the Southeast.

### **Land Legacy Award**

Jim Lange, manager of Benton Lake Wetland Management District in Montana, received the Land Legacy Award, given to Service employees or volunteers who do not work in the realty function.

In the past 10 years, Lange has helped conserve more than 71,000 acres along the Rocky Mountain Front and 31,000 acres in the Blackfoot Valley Conservation Area, both part of Montana's Crown of the Continent ecosystem.

"Land acquisition by the federal government in the western part of the United States is often viewed negatively by landowners and local communities," Mountain-Prairie Region supervisory realty specialist Gary L. Sullivan said in nominating Lange. "Jim has worked hard to establish trust and credibility with key community leaders and ranchers."

### **CAPTION**

The Nature Conservancy's Montana chapter received the Land Legacy Award and the National Land Protection Award for its work in the Crown of the Continent ecosystem in central Montana. (photo by Dave Hanna/The Nature Conservancy)