

## JIM POSEWITZ PROFESSIONAL CONSERVATIONIST AWARD

2018

DAN WENK

The third *Jim Posewitz Professional Conservationist Award* was presented to Dan Wenk for the example he set in championing core conservation values in the face of opposition from many sides during his tenure as Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park from 2011-2018.

Bison management, the reintroduction of the wolf, and the delisting of grizzly bears are with little doubt the three most contentious issues that have confronted Yellowstone Park Superintendents over the past several decades. Each is complex and many factored. In every case, Dan was patient, sought the very best information available, and tried to factor in and then balance likely population trends and habitat changes. When necessary, he rose and defended policies that he thought were in the best long-term interests of the Park bison, wolves, and grizzlies, and of the people who live here — even to the point of retiring from his prestigious position to do so.



Dan Wenk holding his award

The legacy Dan leaves, and the standard he set for other Park Superintendents who follow is one of accumulating scientific knowledge, to climate and other gradual ecologic shifts, to openness to and respect for the professionals with whom they interact, to forward-looking leadership, and to a firm stance in the defense of the animals around which the life of Yellowstone in large part revolves.

Dan's contributions, however, have not simply been to Yellowstone or even the National Park Service, but to our country. His lengthy Park Service career began in 1975, and continued through his service as Superintendent of Mount Rushmore National Memorial (1985-2001), and, after an assignment as NPS Deputy Director of Operations (2007-2011), culminated with his being named Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park. For his outstanding service in leadership positions spanning more than 30 years of his 43-year career, Dan received the Department of the Interior Secretary's *Leadership and Presidential Rank Awards*.

Dan Wenk's recognition for championing core conservation values and setting a high standard for Yellowstone National Park Superintendents was accompanied by a special grant of \$5,000 from the Cinnabar Foundation, which he recommended be awarded to Yellowstone Forever to support its Yellowstone wildlife health program, cougar project, and golden eagle monitoring program.