

Frank Church Wild and Scenic River Award – Joan Harn 2017

This award recognizes management, enhancement and/or protection of congressionally-designated Wild and Scenic Rivers. The award was presented to Joan Harn of the National Park Service at River Rally in Grand Rapids, Michigan on May 10, 2017. Joan has been fostering cooperative relationships, promoting awareness/education, and protecting Wild and Scenic Rivers (WSR) since she assumed the role of co-coordinator of the National Park Service's Wild and Scenic River Steering Committee in 2007, and as the Park Service's Washington DC representative on the Interagency WSR Coordinating Council. Her passion, expertise, cooperative spirit, and attention to detail have enabled the Park Service to effectively respond to numerous threats and to develop protective measures when responding to complex Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing proposals and major water resource development projects affecting Wild and Scenic Rivers.

Joan played a key role in the development of the Park Service's Wild and Scenic River policy and training programs. Joan has provided invaluable assistance to field staff in addressing numerous river stewardship challenges. She made significant contributions to developing Wild and Scenic River user capacity guidance. Joan's energy and commitment to protecting the Wild and Scenic Rivers entrusted to Park Service care (including state-managed rivers) is evident in her tireless work at all levels—on the river to address resource protection needs or in Washington DC leveraging for funding and responding to Congressional Inquiries.

Joan has spearheaded development of a geospatial database for National Park Service Wild and Scenic Rivers. She worked to develop and deliver much-needed training to staff at regional and park offices. Joan lead development of educational Fact Sheets about WSRs for Park Service use. She is a key leader in the development of the Interagency WSR Coordinating Council's User Capacity white paper in response to the Merced Litigation. She coordinated final agency response on the Stillwater Bridge law suit (St Croix NSR), briefed Park Service and Department of the Interior leadership, and worked diligently to ensure that lessons learned are incorporated into agency and Council policy.

Joan provided leadership and guidance for Wild and Scenic Rivers threatened by Marcellus shale development and interstate power transmission corridors. She worked with the Council to consult with FERC on interpretation of Section 7 on a complex hydropower licensing issue, endeavoring to ensure that mitigation projects (e.g. fish habitat enhancement) can continue to be within WSRs. She improved understanding and consistency in Park Service's management of its "partnership" WSRs, forging strong relationships between DC, regions, field staff and non-government partners. Joan sought out and added cultural resources expertise to the Park Service WSR Steering Committee, and made visual resources evaluation skills a priority. Joan started work on a much-needed update to Park Service's inventory of eligible rivers, both within national park areas and elsewhere in the nation, using a modern geospatial database approach

Working for an agency that takes great pride in effective management and stewardship for park units, Joan is a constant advocate for rivers, in particular the diverse set of WSRs the agency is entrusted to manage that are sometimes overlooked by Park Service staff lacking awareness of the National WSR System.

While the creation of the Park Service's WSR program resulted from the efforts of many people, and its work is sustained by staff from all regions, it is not an exaggeration to say that Joan Harn has been the single most important champion of the program, and its hardest worker. Joan cares, graciously but firmly refuses to take "no" for an answer, and effectively seeks win-win solutions.

If Joan Harn's life was a river, its course would be long, its current strong, and its flow permanent. Even with the meanders, there would be plenty of people and wildlife along the shore who rely on her and look to her for guidance and the occasional spray in the face to wake themselves up. Rest assured, the dams Joan met along the way were certain to allow for fish passage and have plenty of flow for boats!