

## George Wright Society honors natural resource experts

The 2005 awards presented by the George Wright Society (GWS) included two winners whose expertise is natural resources: Jan van Wagtendonk (photo, below), a research forester at the U.S.

Geological Survey (USGS), received the 2005 George Melendez Wright Award for Excellence for his groundbreaking research and influence on resource management in Yosemite National Park and the Sierra Nevada; and Linda Drees (photo, right), chief of the Invasive Species Branch, Biological Resource Management Division, National Park Service, won the GWS Natural Resource Management Award for her work in combating invasive exotic species in the U.S. national parks.

The awards were given at the society's biennial conference on parks, protected areas, and cultural sites last March in Philadelphia.

Dr. van Wagtendonk was nominated for the award by Robert Manning, a professor at the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources, University of Vermont, in Burlington. Manning cited the focus of van Wagtendonk's research on three issues critical to the management of parks and protected areas: prescriptions for burning in wildland ecosystems, recreational impacts in wilderness, and the application of geographic information systems (GIS) to resource management. The George Melendez Wright Award for Excellence is the society's highest-level award.

Van Wagtendonk's study of fire led to the development of burning prescriptions and techniques that are used by the National Park Service, the USDA Forest Service, and California State Parks to safely apply fire to ecosystems that are threatened by abnormal accumulations of fuel and to allow naturally caused fires to burn under prescribed conditions. His study of the ecological and social impacts of recreational use of parks led to his model to determine how many people can be engaged in recreational activities in a wilderness area without adversely affecting natural resources. His scientific application of GIS for Yosemite has served as a prototype for other parks and land management agencies.

Linda Drees was nominated by James Akerson, supervisory forest ecologist at Shenandoah National Park, for her exemplary work in planning, organizing, implementing, and controlling the 16 Exotic Plant Management



**Jan van Wagtendonk (left) receives the George Melendez Wright Award for Excellence from David Parsons, George Wright Society board member and Director of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Research Institute.** NPS/CHARLES D. RAFKIND



**Award-winner Linda Drees and Exotic Plant Management Team colleagues Curt Deuser (left), Terry Cacek (middle), and Steve Anderson (right) set out in Courthouse Wash at Arches National Park, Utah, to help with an invasive plant eradication project.** NPS PHOTO

Teams around the country. Those teams now serve more than 208 park units using state-of-the-art techniques and best management practices to survey, control, and monitor invasive plants. In addition, for sustainability of the program, the teams provide the local parks with control information and maintain records of exotic invasions and treatment. Drees has effectively encouraged teams to form among parks and cooperating agencies so that they can accomplish more than their respective programs would allow. She has also instituted the nationwide Alien Plant Control and Monitoring database for rapid and accurate information retrieval about program activities. Linda helps others catch her passion for resource protection by her good will and effusive persistence. By providing effective organization to combat invasive exotic species, she has made an outstanding contribution to preserving and protecting the natural and cultural resources of National Park Service lands.

Awards bestowed by the George Wright Society recognize outstanding contributions to research, resource management, and public education in and about parks and other protected areas. Other 2005 winners were John Hope Franklin, who shared the Award for Excellence with Jan van Wagtendonk. Franklin was recognized for his long and distinguished career as a historian of slavery. The GWS Cultural Resource Management Award went to Nora Mitchell for her many innovations in cultural landscape management and heritage preservation, and the GWS Communication Award was given to David Andrews, editor and designer of *Common Ground*, for his leadership of the National Park Service magazine of archaeology, ethnography, and other cultural resources.