

North Dakota Parks & Recreation Department

# NEWS RELEASE

*For Immediate Release, Dec. 14, 2011*

*For more information, contact Gordon Weixel, 701-328-5357*

## NDPRD presents 2011 awards

The North Dakota Parks and Recreation Department presented its Cal Renner Award of Excellence, Merit and Special Merit awards during its annual All Staff Meeting held at Turtle River State Park at the beginning of December.

NDPRD Assistant Field Manager Karen Assel, is the 2011 recipient of the department's highest honor, the Cal Renner Award of Excellence. Always a mover and shaker, Assel best represents the intent of the award, created in honor of the late Cal Renner whose commitment to excellence as the NDPRD carpenter was well known. She is and has been a driving force behind some of the department's most successful programs and services. Assel has been with NDPRD since 1983.

Three NDPRD employees went "above and beyond" their assigned duties in 2011 and were recognized for their efforts with the Merit Award.

Lara Anderson, Information Technology, created a new website for the department and helped the NDPRD make significant inroads in the Social Media arena. Doug Staples, maintenance supervisor, helped keep Grahams Island State Park open as rising Devils Lake waters threatened the only access. Just getting to work was difficult for GISP staff, but many days Staples found himself plowing the road of debris left behind by the pounding waves making the park accessible for visitors. Haagenson, administrative assistant, also made her way to GISP despite the adverse conditions. Since GISP couldn't use the regular reservation system because of the uncertainty of access, the park took care of the reservations and Haagenson handled most of the workload taking thousands of calls she normally wouldn't have had to deal with.

The Special Merit Awards goes to those organizations and individuals outside the agency who help the NDPRD fulfill its mission. Longtime campground hosts Don and Pat DeMars have been a mainstay at several parks during the past 15 years during which they recorded 9,802 hours of service. Campground managers call the couple an "exceptional host couple" making the parks' staff work easier. Phil Rabon and Lester Olson are original members of the Lewis and Clark State Park Friends Group, which was formed in 1999. The men have contributed a lot of time and effort at LCSP and have served in nearly every capacity on the Friends Group board.

The NDPRD also recognized the members of the Benson County Commission with a Special Merit award for their efforts to keep the Grahams Island Road open. Without the support of commissioners David Davidson,, Lowell Haagenson, Curtis Hvinden, Jason Lee and Michael Steffan, GISP would have been closed for most of 2011.