

Roger Patterson

2005 Maurice Kremer Groundwater Achievement Award Winner

Roger Patterson, the Director of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources from 1999-2005 was awarded with the Foundation's Maurice Kremer Groundwater Achievement Award at 12:00 p.m. on Friday, November 4, at the Lied Conference Center in Nebraska City, Nebraska. The award was presented during the Foundation's annual fall conference as part of its annual awards luncheon. U.S. Senator E. Benjamin Nelson has been invited to present the award to Roger during the lunch. The Kremer Award was established by The Groundwater Foundation in 1985 to recognize Nebraskans who have made a substantive contribution to the conservation and protection of Nebraska's groundwater.

In the words of nominator Don Kraus, General Manager of Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, "Roger Patterson has had more influence on the management of ground and surface water in Nebraska than any other individual in the past five years." The Kremer selection committee endorsed Kraus' assessment, crediting Roger's knowledge of water policy and Nebraska's water resources in his ability to settle lawsuits on both the Platte and Republican Rivers. In addition, the committee sited Roger's key role in partnering with former Governor Mike Johanns and Senator Ed Schrock in initiating and leading the Governor's Water Policy Task Force. As part of this Task Force work, LB 962 was developed and passed as a way to effectively integrate ground and surface water management. In actions taken in the waning days of his tenure, Roger put forward a 50/10 rule that will safeguard surface water flows through limits on groundwater pumping.

According to Groundwater Foundation President Susan Seacrest, the Foundation is especially pleased to present the Kremer Award to the McCook, Nebraska native in light of his recent resignation, the productivity of his six years as Director of the Department of Natural Resources, and the partnership theme of the conference where the award will be presented. Seacrest stated, "With this year's conference, we're focused on the need for citizens to work as partners in groundwater conservation. Urban and rural interests are important to all states, and Roger recognized that a unified system that protects surface, groundwater, and urban interests is key to Nebraska's future. We are honored to recognize Roger's willingness to make tough decisions in tough circumstances."

The Kremer Award is just the latest in an accomplished professional career that includes earning an engineering degree from the University of Nebraska and beginning his water resources career at the Bureau of Reclamation in 1974 where he became the Great Plains Regional Director in 1986. This high level position was followed by serving as Regional Director for the Mid-Pacific Region until his appointment as the Director of the Nebraska Department of Natural Resources in 1999.