



Ecological Restoration Institute

Northern Arizona University
PO Box 15017
Flagstaff, AZ 86011-5017

928-523-7182
928-523-0296 fax
www.eri.nau.edu

News Release

Friday, Aug. 21, 2009

Contact: bonnie.stevens@nau.edu

Ecological Restoration Pioneer to Receive Prestigious Award

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. – He’s been called *the father of restoration* and next week, founder and executive director of the Ecological Restoration Institute at Northern Arizona University Dr. William “Wally” Covington will be honored by the Society for Ecological Restoration International at its 19th world conference in Perth, Australia.

The Regents’ Professor of Forest Ecology in the School of Forestry at NAU will be receiving the prestigious Theodore M. Sperry Award. Sperry, mentored by conservationist Aldo Leopold, is considered one of the pioneers of ecological restoration through his revolutionary work on the Curtis Prairie, the world’s oldest restored prairie, occupying some 60 acres in southern Wisconsin.

“More than any other single individual, Wally Covington has provided the combination of science and vision for restoration of ponderosa pine forests of North America, where he has worked for more than 30 years, both as a graduate student and then as a member of the faculty of NAU. During this time, he has contributed enormously to the basic understanding of structure and function of ponderosa pine forests, as reflected in a truly extraordinary lifetime record of publication in restoration ecology,” said the Society’s Awards Committee Chair Alan Unwin.

Through the Sperry Award, the Society honors individuals who have made a significant advancement to the science or technique used in restoration practices. SER representatives say Dr. Covington has been the leading voice for ecological restoration in the dynamic ponderosa pine ecosystems on the Intermountain West. He also is a key player in national and international forest policy, an important voice in legislation promoting ecological restoration and widely known for developing the presettlement model of restoration labeled the “Flagstaff Plan” by then Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt.

“When you are drawn to the vast ponderosa pine forests and spend decades diagnosing and treating them as if they were a sick patient, you become very focused on finding solutions to restore health,” said Dr. Covington. “It is with great respect for the members of the Society of Ecological Restoration International that I am deeply touched, extremely honored and enthusiastically encouraged. Thank you for noticing, appreciating and motivating those of us who have been feeding a lifelong passion, following a dream and lucky to live long enough to see the results of science-based approaches making a difference on the ground.”

The ERI at NAU was established in 1997. Since then Dr. Covington, ERI researchers and students have been facilitating the restoration of dry, frequent-fire forest ecosystems in the North American West from Mexico to Canada. Dr. Covington also has been instrumental in the creation of the Southwest Ecological Restoration Institutes with the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Colorado.

###