



NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND
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U.S. and Costa Rican Ocean Scientists Share Sweden's 2010 Göteborg Award for Sustainable Development

NOAA Fisheries Scientist Honored for Work on Large Marine Ecosystems

Two ocean scientists who have contributed in different ways to solutions for sustainable use of the oceans will receive The Göteborg Award for Sustainable Development in 2010. The monetary prize, considered by some the environmental equivalent of the Nobel Prize, will be divided equally between Ken Sherman of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for his work on Large Marine Ecosystems and Randall Arauz from Costa Rica for his campaign against shark finning.

The Göteborg Award for Sustainable Development was founded in 1999 by the City of Göteborg and several businesses to stimulate and recognize strategic work in sustainable development, nationally and internationally. The award, one million Swedish crowns or approximately \$130,000 U.S., is administered by a coalition of the City of Göteborg and twelve companies. It will be presented to Sherman and Arauz in Göteborg on November 17.

"Oceans are essential to existence of all life on Earth, and yet perhaps mankind's most ruthless exploitation is taking place in the seas through overfishing, pollution and other environmental impacts that damage biological diversity and the very basis for life both underwater and for humans on land," the award announcement states.

Kenneth Sherman is the director of the Office of Marine Ecosystems Studies, NOAA Fisheries Service, and director of the Narragansett (R.I.) Laboratory, part of NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), headquartered in Woods Hole, Mass. He is also an adjunct professor of oceanography in the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Oceanography.

In announcing the award recipients, the committee noted that Sherman, as an oceanographer and marine biologist, had made it his life's work to promote coordinated and sustainable use of marine resources and marine environments, primarily by developing the Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) concept, which creates natural units that embrace socioeconomic factors and ecological considerations.

"Ken Sherman's LME model is exceptional because it's built on a holistic view with a system perspective," the award committee noted. "Ken Sherman has worked tirelessly for decades, and become more and more successful in generating acceptance for the concept among scientists and politicians. Today the LME concept is generally accepted around the world and has a global network of 64 LME areas."

Eleven of the 64 LMEs are in U.S. waters and include the Gulf of Alaska, California Current, Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea, Southeast U.S. Continental Shelf (from the Straits of Florida to Cape Hatteras, N.C.), and the Northeast U.S. Continental Shelf (from Cape Hatteras to the Canadian border, including the Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank).

“The restructuring of Swedish work on ocean environments and fishing administration, under preparation now, is in perfect sync with Ken Sherman’s ideas on the need for a comprehensive take on fish stocks and fishing, environmental impact and socioeconomic factors as well as better coordination and integration of fresh water, coastal and oceanic issues,” the award committee noted, citing examples of collaborations to coordinate administration among nations in Africa and Southeast Asia.

The concept of LMEs was pioneered by Sherman and University of Rhode Island colleague Lewis Alexander in the 1980s as a way to manage large areas of the ocean by identifying distinct ecosystems based on topography, water depths and currents, productivity and food chain interactions. NOAA has supported the concept, and the United Nations (UN) has provided funding through its Environmental Program, which published an extensive volume co-edited by Sherman detailing the characteristics and state of the 64 LMEs in 2009. Sherman also heads the U.S. LME Program.

“The phone call informing me of the award was a complete surprise,” Sherman said of the news. “In retrospect, recognition by the Selection Committee that Large Marine Ecosystems are important to society and should be protected to ensure sustainable development, will further energize and encourage hundreds of experts working diligently on LME projects in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and eastern Europe.”

In the meantime, Sherman’s long-term studies of the biological, physical, and human-related factors causing change in the U.S. Northeast Shelf LME continue. His international efforts, supported by NOAA, are focused on introducing in economically-developing countries methodologies to assess changes in LME productivity, fish and fisheries, pollution and ecosystem health, socioeconomics, and governance.

Financial assistance to implement LME projects worldwide has been provided to more than 100 developing countries. Contributions total \$3.1 billion from the Global Environment Facility and World Bank and are disbursed through partnerships with NOAA, donor agencies from other countries, five UN agencies and two non-governmental institutions. “International LME projects are making significant progress in recovering depleted fish stocks, improving degraded habitats, reducing pollution and nutrient over-enrichment, and conserving biodiversity,” Sherman says. “These efforts are also helping countries adopt ecosystem management policies to adapt to climate change”.

Sherman will share the prize with Randall Arauz, founder and president of the environmental organization PRETOMA in Costa Rica. Arauz has worked to make people aware of and to stop the practice of shark finning in Costa Rica and internationally.

Previous winners of the Göteborg Award include former Vice President Al Gore (2007) for increasing public awareness about global warming, three Japanese engineers for the development of the Toyota Prius (2006), Norway’s former Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland (2002) for her environmental work for sustainable development, and Canadian entrepreneur Geoffrey Ballard (2000) for his contributions to develop and commercialize fuel cell technology.

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Related links:

The Göteborg Award for Sustainable Development: <http://www.goteborgaward.com/se/>

Large Marine Ecosystems of the World: <http://www.lme.noaa.gov>

PRETOMA: <http://www.pretoma.org/>