

News for Immediate Release



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Illinois Outdoors Hall of Fame to Welcome Conservation and Outdoor Recreational Advocates *Class of 2015 to be Inducted Sept. 24*

SPRINGFIELD, IL – Three individuals will be honored for decades of natural resources and conservation work and advocacy of outdoor recreation opportunities in the state as they are inducted into the Illinois Outdoors Hall of Fame on Thursday, Sept. 24 at the annual Illinois Conservation Foundation Gala at the Hilton Indian Lakes Resort in Bloomingdale.

Elizabeth Bramsen, Fred Keck and Chad Pregracke have been selected from among dozens of nominees submitted by citizens from throughout Illinois for induction as the Class of 2015 for the Illinois Outdoors Hall of Fame.

“We are pleased to recognize these individuals for their dedication to the preservation, promotion and enhancement of the natural wonders of our state,” said Illinois Conservation Foundation Board Chairman Wayne Rosenthal. “This is a first-class Hall of Fame class, and we are proud of their efforts at expanding recreation opportunities and conservation stewardship initiatives that benefit all of our citizens.”

Illinois Outdoors Hall of Fame Class of 2015

Elizabeth Bramsen, Barrington

Illinois Outdoors Hall of Fame and Chairman’s Award for Youth Conservation

Philanthropist Elizabeth Hamill Bramsen has been a lifelong supporter of nature, open spaces, and the environment. Growing up in Wayne, IL with a woods and creek as her backyard she was raised to love the outdoors. She is an ardent supporter of open spaces through her role as a founding board member of

the Barrington Area Conservation Trust. As a trustee, Elizabeth has been a long-time supporter of youth conservation education through the Brookfield Zoo's Hamill Family Play Zoo and Hamill Wild Encounters. The Hamills had been major supporters of Brookfield Zoo for many years when they made the lead gift to build Hamill Family Play Zoo which opened in 2001. This exhibit provides a safe environment for kids to learn through touching animals, planting and tending a garden, building habitats, and more. Since its opening, millions of children and their families have had fun in discovering nature's wonders through play. In July, Brookfield Zoo opened Hamill Family Wild Encounters and Elizabeth and Jim Bramsen once again made a major commitment to name the Bramsen Animal Ambassador Pavilion which is home to the zoo's collection of animal ambassadors. This important program allows zoo guests to get close to and engage with a variety of species both at the zoo and at special events outside of the zoo.

Through her role as board member of the Barrington Area Conservation Trust, Elizabeth has supported the development of BACT/Barrington High School Conservation Leadership Project. The Conservation Leadership Project provides students grades 9-12 with authentic experiences both in the classroom and out in the field that help foster meaningful and lifelong connections to nature. Through classroom programming, more than 200 students will be engaged this year as "citizen scientists" to study the health of Flint Creek, which runs through the high school campus. After-school clubs, guest speakers, internship opportunities and habitat restoration activities offer additional students meaningful real-world conservation experiences.

Following the legacy of her father, Corwith Hamill, Elizabeth Bramsen is inspired to preserve special places that offer significant environmental benefits where people live and play. Throughout the Chicago area, she supports the Chicago Zoological Society, Openlands, Garfield Farm, Illinois Prairie Path, Citizens for Conservation Joe Daviess Conservation Foundation, John G. Shedd Aquarium, the Land Conservancy of McHenry County, the Land Trust Alliance, Friends of the Forest Preserve (Cook County), the Preservation Foundation of Lake County Forest Preserves, the Conservation Foundation, the Equine Land Conservation Resource, the Nature Conservancy of Illinois, the Environmental Law and Policy Center, and the Wayne Area Conservancy Foundation.

Fred Keck, Vandalia

Fred Keck's interest in waterfowl, and in providing habitat and recreation opportunities in Illinois, are well known among hunters and conservation advocates throughout the Midwest. Beginning in the 1980s, Keck developed hundreds of acres of Kaskaskia River bottomland in south-central Illinois into one of the top waterfowl habitat areas in the Mississippi Flyway – Keck's Marsh. Keck joined the board of directors of the Delta Waterfowl Foundation in 1989 and serves today as an honorary director of the organization. Keck was instrumental in development of waterfowl research and habitat management programs that have helped improve duck breeding success in the upper U.S. and Prairie Canada region, including providing free shipping of nesting structures manufactured in Illinois through a freight company he owned. For many years, Keck has also sponsored youth waterfowl hunts at Keck's Marsh, and raised funds for wetland and waterfowl conservation projects and programs in Illinois and throughout the U.S. Keck was a charter member of the Board of Directors of the Illinois Conservation Foundation.

Chad Pregracke, East Moline

Chad Pregracke grew up along the Mississippi River, working summer breaks as a teenager as a commercial mussel shell diver and noticing incredible amounts of unsightly and toxic trash along the river banks. In 1998 at age 23, Pregracke founded Living Lands and Waters, an organization dedicated to restoration and cleanup of the Mississippi and many other rivers. Pregracke's staff, fleet of river cleanup equipment, and coordination of over 90,000 volunteers have resulted in the collection and disposal of more than 8.4 million pounds of debris from the rivers. The organization's mission has expanded to include adopt-a-river programs, tree planting efforts, invasive species removal, and educational

workshops. Pregracke has been presented with dozens of awards for his and his organization's achievements, including the Jefferson Award for Public Service and the 2013 CNN Hero of the Year award. Chad Pregracke has chronicled his work in the book *From the Bottom Up: One Man's Crusade to Clean America's Rivers*.

The Class of 2015 of the Illinois Outdoors Hall of Fame, in advance of the induction ceremony in Bloomingdale on Sept. 24, will be introduced during the Illinois Department of Natural Resources' annual Outstanding Volunteers of the Year award ceremony at Conservation World at the Illinois State Fair on Saturday, Aug. 22 at 11 a.m.

Illinois Conservation Foundation Gala Information

Proceeds from the annual ICF Gala, scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 24 at the Hilton Indian Lakes Resort in Bloomingdale, help "turn screen time into green time" for children across the state by supporting youth conservation education.

"Not only is our gala event a chance to celebrate the newest class of the Hall of Fame, it's also a chance to acknowledge supporters of our mission and is our largest fundraiser of the year," said Eric Schmidt, ICF Executive Director.

For reservations or more information on the Illinois Conservation Foundation Gala, contact the Illinois Conservation Foundation, One Natural Resources Way, Springfield, IL 62702-1271, phone 217/785-2003, or check the ICF web site at www.ilcf.org.

The ICF is an IRS 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit corporation established in 1995 to support the programs of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. The ICF inspires today's youth – tomorrow's leaders – by providing quality outdoor education and programs that instill interest in conservation, ecology and sustainability. Contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law.