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NEWS RELEASE**NATURAL AREAS ASSOCIATION ANNOUNCES AWARD RECIPIENTS***Rick Myers, Ph.D. and Garrett Altmann honored for their contributions to natural areas*

(PITTSBURGH, PA) Nov. 2, 2023 - Natural Areas Association (NAA) is proud to announce the winners of its 2023 annual awards. NAA recognizes exceptional individuals every year who have demonstrated exemplary leadership and achievement in the natural areas profession. For the 2023 awards, the NAA's Awards Committee chose two deserving recipients.

Rick Myers, Ph.D., who recently retired from the Virginia Division of Natural Heritage, is the recipient of the 2023 George B. Fell Lifetime Achievement Award. This prestigious award is given to an individual who has shown exceptional qualities in the profession and has significantly advanced natural area identification, protection, stewardship, research, and NAA's mission. Myers is one of the key contributors in bringing his expertise in fire ecology and management to Virginia, along with a practical and partner-driven approach to resource management and habitat restoration. Under his leadership, more than 1,500 acres of fire-maintained longleaf pine woodlands and savannas have been established on lands protected within the state Natural Area Preserve System in southeast Virginia. Myers' work will continue to influence the stewardship of Virginia lands for generations to come.

Garrett Altmann, the Western Restoration Program Manager at the Environmental Policy Innovation Center (EPIC), is the recipient of the 2023 Carl N. Becker Stewardship Award. This award recognizes Altmann's excellence and achievement in managing the natural resources of reserves, parks, wilderness, and other protected areas. His dedication to the preservation and restoration of natural areas is truly exemplary, and his work has made a significant impact on the field. Through his work at EPIC, Altmann has spent countless hours combing through red tape to determine which federal, state, and local groups could assist after the Santa Clara Pueblo experienced a devastating fire. Shortly after the event, he advised tribal elders to choose the most appropriate partners while encouraging the Pueblo lead to provide Indigenous Knowledge to assist with stabilizing the steeper sections of the canyon's tributaries. Garrett's dedication to the recovery efforts continues to this day.

"We are thrilled to recognize Rick and Garrett for their exceptional contributions to the natural areas profession," said NAA Executive Director Lisa Smith. "Their leadership, dedication, and commitment to the protection and stewardship of natural areas are truly inspiring, and we are honored to celebrate their achievements."

Award recipients were acknowledged during individual award presentations before NAA's virtual annual conference on Thurs., Nov. 2, 2023. To learn more about the winners of this year's awards, please visit the link: bit.ly/46XQKCg

About Natural Areas Association

Natural Areas Association (NAA) serves scientists and practitioners focused on the management of ecologically significant natural landscapes with the intent to protect biodiversity for current and future generations. Learn more at naturalareas.org.