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Ocean Trust's Thor Lassen Given NOAA Environmental Award

Lassen recognized for building public private conservation partnerships

Washington, DC, April 22, 2004 - NOAA honored Thor Lassen on Earth Day 2004 by presenting him with its prestigious Environmental Hero Award. The award was given in recognition of Lassen's tireless efforts to preserve and protect our nation's environment and presented by Dr. William Hogarth, NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Assistant Administrator for Fisheries US Department of Commerce.

Much to Lassen's credit, Ocean Trust is the leading conservation foundation involved in restoring 11,000 acres of a formerly productive nursery and shallow water estuary called Bahia Grande within the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge. It is largest single estuary restoration in the United States.

Thor Lassen heads up Ocean Trust's national partnership with NOAA Community based Restoration Center and the National Fisheries Institute, the leading national seafood trade association. The program has created eighteen unique partnerships between seafood businesses and local restoration groups from Alaska to Massachusetts to restore habitats and marine resources important for coastal fisheries and wildlife around the US.

Lassen is also a key player in the restoration of endangered Kemp's ridley sea turtles and worked with shrimp companies from Mexico and the United States to build the second largest turtle camp located in Tepehuajes, Mexico used to monitor nesting females, protect their eggs and release their hatchlings into the Gulf of Mexico. He recently launched www.releaseahatchling.org to allow members of the public to participate in the turtle restoration project by sponsoring and naming sea turtle hatchlings that are released.

Lassen is a former Congressional Sea Grant Fellow and graduate of the University of Virginia's Environmental Science program and the College of William and Mary's graduate program at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science. This is Lassen's second national honor. In 2000, he was named Person of the Year by *Seafood Business* magazine. He founded Ocean Trust in 1991 and continues to serve as its president.

Established in 1995 to commemorate the 25th anniversary of Earth Day, the Environmental Hero award is presented to individuals and organizations that volunteer their time and energy to help NOAA carry out its mission. Previous recipients include oceanographers Jean-Michel Cousteau and Sylvia Earle, and actor Ted Danson.

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Ocean Trust is a national conservation foundation dedicated to the sustainable use of the oceans. For more information on individual, community or corporate programs visit www.oceantrust.org