

First Annual Dick Thomas Memorial Student Presentation Competition

By Amanda Taub, Outreach Committee Lead

The first annual Dick Thomas Memorial Student Presentation Competition at the 2007 Washington GIS Conference was a great success in Lynnwood, Washington (April 23-25, 2007)!

WAURISA established the Dick Thomas Memorial Award to honor Washington State GIS pioneer and mentor Richard 'Dick' Thomas, who passed away in 2006. The intent of this award is to honor Dick by continuing his work of encouraging students to excel in their studies and to assist them in their successful transition into GIS careers.

WAURISA's goal is to encourage students to present their original work related to GIS, geography, or geographic research in Washington State at the annual Washington GIS Conference. The competition is limited to current students enrolled at least 6 hours in a relevant curriculum at a secondary school, community college, technical school, or university program.

Entries were a paper or presentation based on original work by the student, conducted while enrolled in an appropriate academic program. Four entries were presented during a special student session at the 2007 Washington GIS Conference. Presentations were limited to 15 minutes with an additional 5 minutes for questions.

Interested students submitted 6 abstracts for review by the Student Presentation Competition Committee. The Committee selected 4 students' abstracts to be presented at the Competition. The four selected students' abstracts were: James L. Poelstra, Central Washington University, "A GIS Planning Tool for Integrating Lynx Habitat Conservation with Timber Production on State Forestland in Northeastern Washington"; Matt Lonsdale & Pam Michael, University of Puget Sound, "Factors Affecting the Distribution of *Beggiatoa* spp. Mats in Hood Canal & Quartermaster Harbor, WA"; Lori Williams, University of Washington, Dept. of Epidemiology, "Immune Function & Residential Exposure to Traffic Among Women in King & Snohomish Counties"; and Mike Westra, University of Washington GIS Certificate Program, "Using GIS to Help Plan, Develop & Manage an Urban Mountain Bike Park: Seattle's I-5 Colonnade Project".

The abstracts and presentations were judged based on the students demonstration of expertise and understanding of geographic concepts; demonstration of expertise and understanding of GIS, related technology, and its application; explanation of how the work presented relates to the topic and contributes to greater understanding or knowledge; demonstration of innovative approach and/or critical thinking; and the quality of the written abstract and public presentation.

The following prizes were earned by the student presenters.

First Place: Mike Westra, University of Washington GIS Certificate Program

- Dick Thomas Award Plaque & First Place Certificate
- \$1000 cash
- One year membership in WAURISA
- Free registration to the 2008 Washington GIS Conference
- Publication of paper in *The Summit*

Second Place: James L. Poelstra, Central Washington University

- Dick Thomas Award Second Place Certificate
- \$250 cash
- One year membership in WAURISA
- Free registration to 2008 Washington GIS Conference

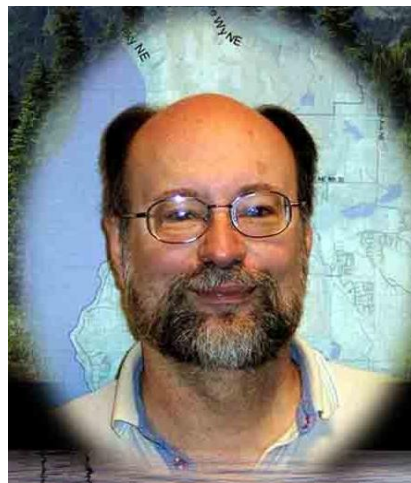
Third Place: Lori Williams, University of Washington, Dept. of Epidemiology

- Dick Thomas Award Third Place Certificate
- \$100 cash
- One year membership in WAURISA

Honorable Mention: Matt Lonsdale & Pam Michael, University of Puget Sound

- Dick Thomas Award Honorable Mention Certificate

I want to thank Mike Westra, James Poelstra, Lori Williams and Matt Lonsdale & Pam Michael for their outstanding presentations. Their hard work and enthusiasm for their research shined in their presentations. I also want to thank



the Selection & Judging Committee for their hard work. I am certain that I was not the only one to miss Dick's presence this year, but I am sure that he would have been proud of these students.