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## **NASDA to Honor Public Servants to Agriculture throughout Annual Meeting**

At the annual meeting of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) in New Orleans, Louisiana this week, top employees of three state departments of agriculture will be honored for their service, communication, and administration to their state.

“There is so much talent working to advance American agriculture in our departments, talent that often goes unrecognized. NASDA’s Honor Awards Program provides our members the opportunity to recognize their staff for their work on a national stage,” said NASDA President and Louisiana Commissioner of Agriculture & Forestry Dr. Michael G. Strain. “Congratulations to our 2017 NASDA Honor Awards recipients!”

### **James A. Graham Award**

The purpose of the James A. Graham Award is to recognize an individual for outstanding work in providing service to agricultural producers.

The James A. Graham Award is awarded to Joe Reardon, Assistant Commissioner for Consumer Protection at the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services. Joe has served the department in various regulatory positions for over 30 years and has also worked cooperatively with state departments of agriculture during his tenure at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Reardon’s leadership, vision and strategic direction increased collaboration and communication with federal, state and local partners to achieve a national integrated food safety system.

### **NASDA Communications Award**

The purpose of the NASDA Communications Award is to recognize an individual for outstanding work in media and public communications within a state agency resulting in improved understanding of agriculture and agricultural programs.

The Honor Award for Communications is awarded to Donna Gilson, Sr. Communications Specialist, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection. Gilson has played a critical role in improving the public’s understanding of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection’s mission and role in the agriculture industry.

Whether the topic is sustainable agriculture, farmland preservation, soil erosion, endangered species, food safety and animal health, or any number of others, Gilson has dedicated herself to educating and guiding the public about a variety of agriculture issues through the years. She has been on the front lines of skillfully managing communications for some of our state’s most important issues.

### **Douglass-Irvin Administration Award**

The purpose of the Douglass-Irvin Administration Award is to recognize an individual for outstanding contributions within a state agency resulting in improved efficiency and impact.

The recipient of the 2017 Douglass – Irvin Administration Award is Kristy McCabe, Finance Director at



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the Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services. By streamlining policies to increase productivity, developing new processes to improve operations, reaping efficiencies from cross training, improving organizational structure, automating services, and approaching every day's work with excellent service in mind; McCabe has played a critical role in improving the operations of the department she serves.

#### **Ambassador's Circle Award**

Forging new partnerships for sound agriculture policy relies on generous stakeholders. The newly established Ambassador's Circle Award recognizes an external stakeholder to NASDA who has provided exemplary dedication to advancing NASDA's mission.

The recipient of the 2017 NASDA Ambassador's Circle Award is Dennis Kelly, Head of State Affairs for Syngenta. Having attended every NASDA Annual Meeting since 1992, Dennis Kelly has more than 25 years of experience of working cooperatively with NASDA Members to advance American agriculture. Working with farmers and regulators across the United States, Dennis has had the opportunity to help growers enhance their agricultural production through the use of new technologies. Dennis is a core part of the support mechanism for NASDA and the entire agriculture community. Dennis is a dedicated industry leader whose leadership, personal effort, and dedication to NASDA have contributed to successful policy outcomes and the amplification of NASDA's mission.

NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries, and directors of the departments of agriculture in all fifty states and four U.S. territories. To learn more about NASDA, please visit [www.nasda.org](http://www.nasda.org). To view a list of previous recipients of the awards, or review the purpose of each award, click [here](#).

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