

## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE CITATION



The Distinguished Service Citation is given to an ecologist for long and distinguished service to the Society, to the larger scientific community, or to the larger purpose of application of ecology in the public welfare. This year's recipient is Dr. Wes Jackson of the Land Institute.

Dr. Wes Jackson started his career as an academic biologist, working his way up to the rank of a tenured full professor at California State University, Sacramento. But in 1976 he resigned and went back to his roots in rural Kansas to found The Land Institute at Salina, Kansas, where he remains as President to this day. Through this Institute, and through his speaking engagements and his influential writings aimed at the public, Dr. Jackson has championed the cause of an ecologically rational and sustainable agriculture. His stance toward sustainability dovetails with the Ecological Society of America's own longstanding concern with informing national policy on environmental issues.

In a series of eloquent and passionately written books, including *Altars of Unhewn Stone*, *New Roots for Agriculture*, *Becoming Native to This Place*, *Consulting the Genius of the Place: An Ecological Approach to a New Agriculture*, Dr. Wes Jackson has developed a conceptual framework for agriculture that emphasizes messages drawn from natural ecosystems. Modern agriculture all too often involves mining the soil, with vast losses via erosion due to annual tilling; the heavy-handed use of pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers, which end up poisoning the water and air and unnaturally altering the nutrient pools and dynamics of many communities and ecosystems; and, last and maybe worst, a dependency upon fossil fuels, the extraction, distribution, and use of which itself spawns a wide range of potentially catastrophic environmental woes.

Dr. Jackson and his wife founded The Land Institute over 30 years ago, and it has grown over time to become a significant site for applied ecological research. This is no small feat, in and of itself. A specific theme that Dr. Jackson and his associates at The Land Institute have worked to develop is a perennial polyculture cropping system, with crop species, for instance, drawn from a rich variety of species in the prairie ecosystem (appropriate for agroecosystems found in such biomes). The ideal toward which he aims would be to move humankind away from its dependence on monotonous monocultures, stretching to the horizon in many parts of the world, genetically depauperate fields of one of a mere handful of annual plants, a style of agriculture on which most of the human population now depends for its sustenance. Dr. Jackson is a visionary, thinking well beyond the bounds of traditional agricultural science toward what he calls Natural Systems Agriculture. Like all visionaries, much hard work still must happen for the vision to be articulated in practice, and Dr. Jackson would be the first to admit that a sustainable agriculture is still in the future. But many of the important elements of such an agriculture are now clear to a broader community and recognized by segments of the public, in large measure due to the writings of Dr. Jackson, and the Land Institute which he founded.