



Lettau Garners National Recognition for Leadership in Gypsy Moth Battle

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MADISON – Chris Lettau, who led Wisconsin's Cooperative Gypsy Moth Program for eight years, was recently presented with the Leadership and Professional Service Award by the National Gypsy Moth Management Board.

Lettau, an employee of the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, received the national award in Portland, OR, during the Annual Gypsy Moth Review. The review is the annual gathering of North American scientists and regulatory officials working to slow the spread of gypsy moths across the nation, and to limit damage where the insects have become established.

He received the award "in recognition of his exemplary leadership and professionalism in advancing the mission of the Slow-the-Spread Gypsy Moth Program."

"Chris is well respected and trusted for his experience, intelligence, his calm and thoughtful delivery of ideas, his contributions to the organizations in which he serves, and the respect he shows his colleagues," said Melody Walker, who was previously Lettau's supervisor. "Chris is cool under fire and maintains his composure and professionalism in all situations, be it reporters, concerned citizens, speaking with academic experts, or national program managers." Lettau has since moved to a new position in the department, enforcing environmental regulations in the field.

John Petty, Agricultural Resource Management Division administrator, said, "Chris exemplifies the best in public service. He quietly listened and learned and grew into his role here, and then went on to become a national leader. He helped make Wisconsin a leading player on a national stage."

Lettau began working in the gypsy moth program in 2000, and three years later, took on many of the leader's responsibilities when the program coordinator moved on. Because of his exemplary work, he was promoted to the coordinator job, ultimately also adding emerald ash borer survey and control programs to his duties. He continued to provide support to those programs even after he moved to environmental enforcement, until a successor could be found.

In addition to building the Wisconsin program, he served in technical and leadership roles with the Cooperative Forest Health Protection Aerial Aviation Safety Council, the Executive Committee of the National Gypsy Moth Management Board, and the Gypsy Moth Slow-the-Spread technical and operations committees. Lettau has also contributed to numerous research projects that helped graduate students earn advanced degrees and scientists publish academic articles.

Lettau holds a bachelor of science degree in natural sciences and biology from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.



Chris Lettau

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Since their accidental introduction in Massachusetts in the 19th century, gypsy moths have spread across much of the eastern United States. Their "frontier" is now in Wisconsin, and about two-thirds of the state is generally infested. The Cooperative Gypsy Moth Program attempts to slow their spread to limit their aesthetic and economic impact. During population peaks, they can defoliate entire forests, changing ecosystems, and strip trees bare in entire communities.

The program is a partnership of DATCP, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

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