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CTASLA Presents 2014 Connecticut Olmsted Award to State Representative and Soundkeeper, Terry Backer

New Haven, CT — The Connecticut Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (CTASLA) has presented its 2014 Connecticut Olmsted Award to **State Representative Terry Backer**, Assistant Majority Whip and representative to the state legislature from Stratford.

The Olmsted Award, named after Connecticut native Frederick Law Olmsted, who founded the modern landscape architecture profession in the 19th century, is given annually by CTASLA to an organization or person from Connecticut who has employed the principle of stewardship of the environment as a guiding force in their actions. The award was presented in December at the chapter's annual meeting in New Haven.

"This year's recipient of the Olmsted award has worked tirelessly for the past 30 years to advocate for Long Island Sound and the environment of Connecticut," said David Verespy, CTASLA's immediate past president, who presented the award.

The rivers and streams that cut through the Connecticut landscape en route to Long Island Sound contribute to the charm and character of our state. The waters of Long Island Sound itself are also where many in our coastal communities earn their living. The Sound provides almost \$9 billion dollars per year of economic activity.

For years, however, Long Island Sound was used as a dumping ground for industrial toxins and municipal sewage. Beaches closed, fish and lobster stocks died off during record algal blooms, and Connecticut's coastal environment suffered.

In 1984 Norwalk native Terry Backer — who had been engaged in lobster and shell fishing for many years — banded together with other fishermen to form the Connecticut Coastal Fishermen's Association, which tracked down the municipal and corporate polluters and took them to court for Clean Water Act violations.

In 1987 he became the "Soundkeeper" for Long Island Sound, and used this position to advocate for the biological, physical, and chemical integrity of Long Island Sound and its watershed. His leadership resulted in salt marshes being restored, improved water quality, reduced pollution, and numerous other gains. In April 2012, Rep. Backer was honored for his 25 years of work as the Long Island Soundkeeper.

Rep. Backer was elected to the Connecticut House of Representatives in 1993 from the 121st District in Stratford, and is currently serving his 11th term. He has served in numerous positions in the legislature, including Vice Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Chairman of the Energy and Technology Committee, Assistant Majority Leader, and Assistant Majority Whip. Rep. Backer has also held the position of House Chairman of the Appropriation subcommittee on Conservation and Development, tasked with crafting the budget for several state agencies including the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, the Department of Economic Development, and the Department of Agriculture.

Rep. Backer has focused his activities in the Environment Committee on water quality improvements and reduction of pollution from stormwater runoff. His activities in the Energy and Technology Committee have focused on renewable energy and energy security, with a special interest in peak oil concerns. He has passionately advocated for the development and advancement of alternative energy sources as a way to combat the costs associated with scarce fossil fuels.

In 1999 Mr. Backer had a formative role in creating the WaterKeeper Alliance, an international coalition of now nearly 250 organizations on six continents all advocating for swimmable, drinkable, fishable water in their respective regions. Today, the Waterkeeper Alliance, with Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. as President and Terry Backer as Vice President, continues to work in key areas of water purity, climate change, and clean and safe energy.

Frederick Law Olmsted is best known for his creation of New York's Central Park as well as such prominent Connecticut landscapes as Bridgeport's Beardsley and Seaside Parks, New Britain's Walnut Hill Park, and Hartford's Pope Park. He is buried in Hartford's Old North Cemetery.

Past recipients of the CTASLA Connecticut Olmsted Award have included Senator Joseph Lieberman (1997); Lieutenant Governor M. Jodi Rell and Senate President Pro Tempore Kevin B. Sullivan (2002); the Green Valley Institute (2004); State Senators Bill Finch (2005) and Andrew Roraback (2007); James Gustave Speth, Dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies (2009), and William DeMaio, Director of the New Britain Parks and Recreation (2013).

Founded in 1899, the American Society of Landscape Architects is the national professional association for landscape architects, representing more than 15,000 members. Landscape architecture is a comprehensive discipline of land analysis, planning, design, management, preservation and rehabilitation. ASLA promotes the landscape architecture profession and advances the practice through advocacy, education, communication and fellowship.

Learn more about landscape architecture online at www.asla.org. For more information on activities of the Connecticut Chapter, please see our website at www.ctasla.org.

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