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FGCU Wetlands Expert Earns International Honor

*Ramsar Merit Award Recognizes Mitsch for Contributions to Science*

FORT MYERS, Fla. – William J. Mitsch, director of FGCU’s Everglades Wetland Research Park in Naples, was honored in Uruguay June 3 with an international award for advancing the knowledge and understanding of wetlands around the world.

An eminent scholar and professor of marine and ecological sciences, Mitsch received the 2015 Merit Award at a meeting of nations that uphold the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, an intergovernmental treaty that provides a
global framework for the conservation and use of wetlands.

Mitsch joined Florida Gulf Coast University in 2012 as the Juliet C. Sproul Chair for Southwest Florida Habitat Restoration and Management and is at the forefront of research on the restoration of large ecosystems such as the Florida Everglades.

“As a lifetime wetland scientist, it is a distinct honor for me to receive this Merit Award,” Mitsch said. “Ramsar has become the chief political force in the world for saving the world’s wetlands and aquatic resources from destruction and pollution. I hope I will be able, in some small way, to assist them in that mission.”

Mitsch co-wrote what is considered the definitive textbook on wetlands ecology, published in 1986 and now in its fifth edition. He also serves as editor-in-chief of the international journal Ecological Engineering. While teaching at The Ohio State University in Columbus, he designed and managed the Olentangy River Wetland Research Park, which has become a model for other research sites and is designated as one of Ramsar’s “Wetlands of International Importance.”

In 2004 Mitsch was awarded the Stockholm Water Prize by King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden for contributions to the conservation and protection of water resources. He received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Society of Wetland Scientists in 2007.

The Ramsar Wetland Conservation Awards recognize the contributions of individuals, organizations and governments around the world toward achieving the conservation and wise use of wetlands. More than 160 countries have signed on to the Ramsar treaty since it was signed in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran. Mitsch serves as chairman of the U.S. National Ramsar Committee.

“This award is a wonderful recognition of the outstanding contributions that Dr. Mitsch has made to wetlands research during his career,” said Robert Gregerson, dean of FGCU’s College of Arts and Sciences. “His work to restore and repair wetland ecosystems is very much in line with FGCU's sustainability focus, and our students benefit from the opportunity to learn
from a scientist with a worldwide reputation in his field.”

For more information about the Everglades Wetland Research Park go to www.fgcu.edu/swamp.

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