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## NASDA Announces 2024 Honor Award Recipients

INDIANAPOLIS – At its 2024 [Annual Meeting](#) in Indianapolis, the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture recognized three exemplary employees of state departments of agriculture for their service, communication and administration on behalf of their state.

“NASDA members are committed to strengthening and promoting agriculture across the country, and we could not do that without the excellent work of employees at our state departments,” NASDA President Blayne Arthur said. “The NASDA Honor Awards are a small token of gratitude for the hard work and dedication of these individuals in the service of agriculture each day.”

This year, NASDA will also award the Ambassador’s Circle Award for the first time posthumously. Congratulations to the 2024 NASDA Honor Award recipients:

### **James A. Graham Award for Outstanding Service**



Hassey Brooks, deputy commissioner of the Alabama Department of Agriculture & Industries, is the recipient of the James A. Graham Award for Outstanding Service. This award is given in recognition of remarkable work in providing service to farmers and ranchers.

Brooks has worked for the Alabama Department of Agriculture for 17 years, sharing his knowledge of agriculture and leadership skills with his community and agriculture groups. He brought millions of federal dollars to Alabama through programs and grants directly benefitting farmers and continues to advocate for farmers and share his passion for the industry with them. Brooks is a fourth generation farmer, working on his family’s cattle operation.

## Douglass-Irvin Administration Award



Cathy Weeks, special events coordinator at the Indiana State Department of Agriculture, has been selected as the 2024 Douglass-Irvin Administration Award in recognition of her outstanding contributions within a state agency resulting in improved administrative efficiency and impact.

Weeks has been instrumental in the planning of the 2024 NASDA Annual Meeting, a collaboration between the Indiana State Department of Agriculture and the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. Weeks' meticulous planning not only contributed to NASDA Annual Meeting, but also strengthened the department's reputation and relationships with other state agencies and stakeholders as she worked to meet the needs of her department and the broader agricultural community.

## Communications Award



Rebecca Eddy, public information officer for the Connecticut Department of Agriculture, received the 2024 Communications Award. This award recognizes outstanding work in media and public communications resulting in improved understanding of agriculture.

Eddy has served a critical role to improving understanding of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture's mission and role in the agriculture industry since she began with the department in 2014. Eddy leads the charge on engaging the press and public with messaging that encourages consumer engagement and support of the agriculture industry. Last year, Eddy created a social media post highlighting farmers effected by flooding which went viral, and, coupled with a press event hosted by the agency, generated



more than \$6 million worth of news coverage.

Eddy serves as the 2023-2024 [Communication Officers of the State Departments of Agriculture](#) secretary, joining state agriculture department communications leaders from across the U.S. to better serve all of agriculture.

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



NASDA named the late Bill Northey, former NASDA member and USDA Under Secretary for Farm Production and Conservation, as this year's recipient of the Ambassador's Circle Award. The Ambassador's Circle Award recognizes NASDA's external ambassadors who advanced the organization's work in the states, nationally and beyond.

Northey served as Iowa Secretary of Agriculture from 2007 to 2018 when he continued serving our country at USDA until 2021. Northey had an immense depth of knowledge and experience in agriculture, and worked tirelessly to ensure farmers and ranchers were kept at the center of issues. Northey built relationships across sectors, ensuring all sides were heard and supported through difficult issues while uplifting farmers and ranchers.

In recognition of Northey's lifelong service to the agricultural sector, the NASDA board announced the Ambassador's Circle Award will from now on be known as the Bill Northey Legacy Award.

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NASDA is a nonpartisan, nonprofit association which represents the elected and appointed commissioners, secretaries and directors of the departments of agriculture in all 50 states and four U.S. territories. NASDA enhances American food and agricultural communities through policy, partnerships and public engagement. To learn more about NASDA, please visit [www.nasda.org](http://www.nasda.org).