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NASDA Announces 2026 Honor Award Recipients

PORTLAND, Maine -- At its [2026 annual meeting](#), 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.

“Each year, NASDA is proud to recognize the people who lead, serve and keep agriculture growing in their states,” said **Maine Commissioner of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry and NASDA President Amanda Beal**. “Congratulations and well-deserved to Logan, Terry and Aaron. Their work is a great reminder that strong state departments of agriculture depend on talented, dedicated people who care deeply about serving others. Each has made a meaningful difference for their agency, their agricultural community and the people they serve, and I’m proud that NASDA is recognizing their outstanding contributions.”

This year, NASDA also awarded the Bill Northey Legacy Award and the NASDA Public-Private Partnership Award.

Congratulations to the 2026 NASDA Honor Award recipients:

Communications Award:

Left to right: NASDA President, Commissioner Amanda Beal (Maine), Director Jillien Streit (Montana), Communications Officer Logan Kruse (Montana), NASDA CEO Ted McKinney



National Association of State Departments of Agriculture

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Communications Officer for the Montana Department of Agriculture Logan Kruse received the 2026 Communications Award. This award honors distinguished efforts in media and public communications that enhance public understanding of agriculture. A young, first-time rancher himself, Kruse's passion for agriculture is rooted in respect for the people doing the work every day, and he advances their stories at the department with honesty, energy and a clear belief in the future of Montana agriculture. Kruse is dependable, steady and easy to work alongside. His cool demeanor helps bring calm and clarity when the pace picks up. His reliability means teammates know they can count on him to follow through. Kruse is also a 2026 officer for the [Communications Officers of State Departments of Agriculture](#).

Douglass-Irvin Administration Award:



Left to right: NASDA President, Commissioner Amanda Beal (Maine), Executive Assistant Terry Smith (Vermont), Secretary Anson Tebbetts (Vermont), NASDA CEO Ted McKinney

Terry Smith, executive assistant for the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, has been selected as the 2026 Douglass-Irvin Administration Award in recognition of her exceptional contributions to a state agency, leading to enhanced administrative efficiency and greater organizational impact.

For more than a decade, Smith has been a strong and dedicated leader at the agency. Her responsibilities are wide-ranging, from monitoring legislative affairs and preparing weekly agency reports to coordinating multiple schedules and responding to the needs of Vermonters. She consistently keeps the many moving parts of the agency on track. At her core, Terry is a public servant, and her commitment to serving the state of Vermont is evident in everything she does.

James A. Graham Award for Outstanding Service:



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Left to right: NASDA President, Commissioner Amanda Beal (Maine), Commissioner Hugh Weathers (South Carolina), Deputy Commissioner for Agency Operations Aaron Wood (South Carolina), NASDA CEO Ted McKinney

Aaron Wood, Deputy Commissioner for Agency Operations at the South Carolina Department of Agriculture is the recipient of the 2026 James A. Graham Award for Outstanding Service. This award honors outstanding efforts in delivering meaningful support and service to farmers and ranchers.

Wood oversees the Commissioner's Office and the Information Technology, Grants Management, State Farmers Markets, and Administration Divisions. Wood began his career at the department in 2005 and exemplifies the three foundations that have led to success at the South Carolina Department of Agriculture: accountability, culture and execution. From establishing new programs to solve problems based on feedback from farmers to seeking additional service and leadership training opportunities, Wood brings a strong work ethic that has helped increase efficiency and create a very positive culture at the department.

Bill Northey Legacy Award



From left to right: NASDA President Amanda Beal (Maine), Syngenta Head of State Affairs Dave Flackne, NASDA CEO Ted McKinney

The Bill Northey Legacy Award, formerly the Ambassador's Circle Award, recognizes external stakeholders to NASDA who have provided exemplary dedication to advancing the NASDA mission. This year's Northey Legacy Award has been awarded to Dave Flakne, Head of State Affairs for Syngenta. Dave has been a constant at NASDA meetings, having only missed one annual meeting in 35 years. Throughout his distinguished career, he has demonstrated an unwavering dedication to agriculture, working to strengthen the industry through collaboration, thoughtful advocacy, and strong relationships with agricultural leaders across the country. A longtime friend and partner of NASDA, Dave has consistently recognized the important role of state departments of agriculture and has worked alongside NASDA members to advance shared priorities and find practical solutions for farmers and the broader agricultural community.

NASDA Public-Private Partnership Award:



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From left to right: ADM Vice President of State Government Relations Greg Webb, NASDA President, Commissioner Amanda Beal (Maine), NASDA CEO Ted McKinney



The NASDA Public–Private Partnership Award honors a NASDA Partner organization that has worked alongside state departments of agriculture to deliver a program, project or service with a meaningful impact at the state or national level. This year, the award is presented to ADM. ADM’s leadership and partnership with state departments of agriculture was crucial in the success of [NASDA’s 2025 United Kingdom Sustainable Aviation Fuel \(SAF\) Inbound Trade Mission](#). ADM worked with several state agriculture departments including Illinois, Iowa and Nebraska to demonstrate the Midwest’s role in the agricultural feedstock-to-fuel value chain. Through these efforts, ADM helped UK policymakers better understand how Midwestern agriculture, processing, renewable fuels and public policy work together and strengthened relationships between international stakeholders and state agricultural leaders. Greg Webb, ADM’s Vice President of State Government Relations, was an outstanding representative of the company throughout the effort, bringing nearly four decades of experience and helped to bridge ADM’s industry expertise with NASDA members’ priorities. ADM’s willingness to open its facilities, share technical expertise and actively support engagement across three states made the mission an impactful experience.

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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 engages state departments of agriculture to strengthen U.S. agriculture and allied industries through policy, partnerships and public outreach. To learn more about NASDA, please visit www.nasda.org.



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