



January 24, 2022

**LaGasse Medal Nominations**

c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

RE: **Matt Arnn, ASLA**

Dear Board of Trustees of the American Society of Landscape Architects:

I am honored and pleased to submit this nomination for Matt Arnn, ASLA for the LaGasse Medal for landscape architects.

Matt Arnn, ASLA is the U.S. Forest Service's Chief Landscape Architect. Located in the Recreation, Heritage, & Volunteer Resources Unit in Washington, DC, Matt provides professional leadership to the agency's 120+ landscape architects practicing on over 190 million acres of National Forests and Grasslands. He assists in planning, design and administration of 10 National Monuments, 22 National Recreation Areas, and 11 National Scenic Areas.

Since the Forest Service manages 36 million acres of wilderness, 370,000 heritage sites, 122 wild and scenic rivers, and 156,000 miles of trails, Matt's skills essentially touch a large percentage of our nation's outdoor treasures.

Forest Service landscape architects have long been involved in defining the character of national forests and grasslands, creating a sense of place through what they build, where they build, and how they maintain recreation sites. Matt's mission is guiding his Forest Service team to invite the public to experience social interaction while visiting remarkable ecological places, and instill positive emotional and physical engagement for visitors to public lands. Matt has worked across the continent and abroad, designing and planning visitor centers, trails, campgrounds, interpretation experiences, scenic overlooks, night-sky viewing areas, and recreation infrastructure. He is responsible for overseeing and updating applicable national technical and policy chapters of the Forest Service Handbook.

Matt holds undergraduate and graduate degrees in landscape architecture, urban design, and planning from the University of Texas, Austin; The City College of New York; and the University of Virginia - School of Architecture.

Before joining the Forest Service, Matt was a practicing landscape architect in New York City with Lee Weintraub Landscape Architecture, and a founding partner with iSTUDIO Architects in Washington, DC. An excellent public speaker, he's lectured at the Cooper

Hewitt National Design Museum, the National Building Museum, Morgan State University, University of Maryland, and Cornell University. Within the Forest Service, he provides training to numerous landscape architects and other environmental and technical disciplines. His award-winning projects have been published in *Metropolis Magazine*, *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, and *Gourmet Magazine*. He's been quoted in many online magazines and blogs. He has taught diverse landscape architecture topics in schools, conferences and on webinars. He recently contributed to an ASLA Government Affairs panel, "*Landscape Architects as Federal Leaders*." His latest publications include, "*Designing and Managing Resilient Recreation Landscapes*," USDA Forest Service, released in 2019 and "*Iconic Places of the U.S. Forest Service*," in 2018.

Matt is one of the most talented people I know. His professional interests are broad, his ambition to learn, boundless. Not only is he a creative landscape architect, he's an accomplished artist and uses his skills to prepare superb plans, renderings, and sketches that have been published in *Landscape Architecture Magazine* and others. He loves modern architecture and often incorporates elegant structural design into his landscape architectural projects.

In group meetings, I observed his organizational skills, easy going demeanor, and how colleagues and senior staff admired and respected him. During joint meetings of federal agency landscape architects working in the nation's capital, I witnessed his wisdom and excitement for policy coordination, sharing success stories, and collaborating on unified rating systems for scenic landscapes across agencies. His opinions and recommendations are sought after at the highest levels at USDA. Recently, the Forest Service Office of Legislative Affairs requested him to suggest methods to implement innovation and sustainability programs throughout the agency. Several of his suggestions were forwarded to the Secretary of Agriculture.

Matt has been asked to advise on design issues by the *National Forest Foundation* and the *Mayors' Institute on City Design*. The Institute is a partnership of the U.S. Conference of Mayors and the National Endowment for the Arts, and was just awarded the 2021 LAF Founder's Award. The award is for transforming communities by preparing mayors to be the chief urban designers of their cities.

Matt enjoys organizing the internal Forest Service landscape architecture conferences to showcase new policy releases, notable Forest Service case studies, and technology exchange. I've attended several. It is a joy to witness the excitement of the Forest Service landscape architects in attendance, and the inspiration he conveys. He has at times scheduled the Forest Service conference in the same location as ASLA's annual meeting, so most staff can attend both and earn CEU's. Currently, during the pandemic, Matt organizes and leads very well attended virtual conferences.

**The Living Memorials Project:**

In the wake of September 11th, 2001, the United States Congress asked the Forest Service to create and manage a *Living Memorials Project (LMP)*. Matt was assigned co-leader. I remember him investing an enormous amount of time on this critically important project. Their team efforts led to the creation of over 50 new parks, memorials, and open spaces that helped affected communities heal and regain hope. Much of his work is featured on the Forest Service Living Memorials Project website, where the public can use interactive maps, and search a National Registry of projects, publications, and tools to develop their own living memorials. The project website is masterfully designed, and an excellent collection of Urban Forestry information.

**Scenery Management:**

Matt's expertise with the Forest Service's Scenery Management System inspired an effort by the Bureau of Land Management to develop a multi-federal scenery management policy. The outcome of his and the policy team resulted in the "*Guidance on Landscape Level Mitigation for Shared Scenic Resources and Values*" policy document. It is now used by the design divisions at many federal agencies: The USDA Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Army Corps of Engineers, The National Park Service, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Department of Transportation, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and the National Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

**Carhart Centennial Corps:**

For the 100th anniversary of the hiring of Arthur Carhart, the Forest Service's first landscape architect and recreation professional, Matt and his team developed a program to create a new cadre of diverse landscape architecture resource assistants. Named the "*Carhart Centennial Corps - Go CCC Fellows*," this program enables the hiring of new landscape architects to paid positions across the country. They will be mentored by existing Forest Service landscape architects to deliver design services to numerous Forest Service units. The new staff receives a substantial boost to their career through their work in sustainable recreation projects, the contacts they make in the profession, and deliver stewardship benefits to the public. With successful completion of program requirements, the CCC Fellows are offered full-time positions within the Forest Service.

**Open Accessible Space Information System:**

The Open Accessible Space Information System (OASIS) is a collective partnership of private and public sector representatives that have constructed and operate New York City's first web-based community Geographic Information System. It is dedicated to providing easy-to-use green infrastructure mapping by the city's residents. Matt worked at the Forest Service's Northeastern Area State & Private Forestry office in New York at the

time and was instrumental in organizing USDA's input, staff and early partnership objectives. The Forest Service is the founding partner and funder of OASIS and was responsible for generating the interest among a large number of groups to form a network built for community members' use. Currently, the participating and funding organizations include federal, state and local agencies, GIS mapping companies, universities, professional academies and alliances, several centers for scientific research, planning organizations, community garden groups, and historic preservationists. Visit their terrific website at [oasisnyc.net](http://oasisnyc.net).

### **The Urban Resources Partnership:**

Matt assisted in developing a new *USDA Urban Resources Partnership (URP)* experimental program. It was a joint Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service effort to implement urban conservation offices in a dozen major cities throughout the United States. The USDA issued grants, and landscape architecture design assistance for urban and community gardens to disadvantaged communities. Lasting several years, the program was highly successful. Inner city community groups welcomed the federal assistance to promote healthy eating and organic vegetable gardening in their communities. I'm pleased to hear that an off-shoot of URP has 2022 funding to reintroduce elements of this program.

### **USDA Headquarters Sustainable Master Plan:**

The *USDA Headquarters Sustainable Master Plan* design charrette occurred on a bright, cool day in November 2007, when Matt and the USDA Sustainable Landscape Partnership team brought together experts in landscape architecture, forestry, horticulture, hydrology, and engineering to inspire a vision for the future of the USDA headquarters on the National Mall. The 70 design professionals attending were asked to conceptualize a transformation of the headquarters buildings, landscapes, and streetscapes. Guest designers produced creative ideas to convert lawns, parking lots, and non-native plant materials into a stormwater collecting, native plant oasis, with organic food gardens, farmer's market festivals, and learning labs. They recommended forming a partnership model and to use the USDA site as a showcase for sustainable site practices. Nearly all those ideas were incorporated into an award-winning Master Plan. Construction was to be funded by Congress, and built-out within a decade. *Landscape Architecture Magazine* sent a reporter to the charrette, who spent the entire day covering the design free-for-all. The March 2008 LAM issue features an 8-page spread detailing the day's process and outcomes. The beautiful layout and story ends with one of Matt's sketches illustrating participants' ideas. Funding for restarting the effort occurred this past January with results hopefully as soon as this fiscal year.

Matt is advising the National Capital Planning Commission on best urban forestry practices for inclusion in the Monumental Core Streetscape Guide. New and important revitalization initiatives to improve Independence Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue streetscapes



between 3rd Street and 15th Streets will be included. He is also integrating SITES V 2 Guidelines into many of the Forest Services design and construction programs.

**ASLA's Headquarters Federal Landscape Architect Advisory Workgroup:**

Matt and two other federal agency landscape architects advised ASLA National on the unique issues of landscape architecture practice in federal government positions, offered ideas to increase federal LA attendance at ASLA conferences, and schedule Federal Public Practice sessions and tours. ASLA implemented most of the recommendations.

**Powell Elementary School Garden Design and Student Charrette:**

One of the most fun projects I ever attended, and co-organized by Matt, was the student design charrette at Powell Elementary School in Washington, DC in March of 2011. Co-sponsored by the Washington Capitals Hockey Team - *Caps Care* community outreach program, and USDA *People's Garden Initiative*, the entire student body and their teachers were invited to help design an outdoor educational garden at their school. The students were thrilled and dreamed up many wonderful ideas. Matt helped lead the charrette and carefully analyzed the students' many sketches and incorporated their ideas into a unique plan. Construction of the garden started in June of 2011 with students, members of the Caps, USDA, and teachers providing the labor. Visit the Washington Capitals "Caps Care" section of their website for wonderful photo coverage of both events.

Matt is an exemplary landscape architect in a leadership role, at a national scale, in public-sector landscape architecture. His professional future will continue to be groundbreaking, exciting, and rewarding. With Federal Infrastructure funding on the horizon, Matt will be deeply involved with his agency's critically needed Recreation Investment programs. It is my sincere wish that Matt receive the LaGasse Medal in recognition of his professionalism, creativity, and stewardship of our public lands.

Sincerely,



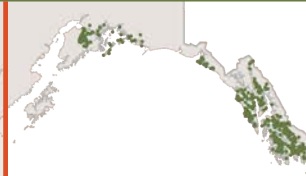
Robert E. Snieckus, FASLA  
National Landscape Architect - Retired  
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Washington, DC



# The forest service is the largest, most diverse provider of recreation opportunities in the world

Outdoor recreation is by far the single greatest use of the National Forest System, dwarfing every other use. The number of recreation visits on the National Forest System rose from about 5 million in 1925 to about 149 million today. That's a growth rate of over 3,000 percent. Not surprisingly, it is also the single greatest employer, and it provides the single greatest stimulus for local economies.

Visitors today engage in activities such as hiking, camping, picnicking, skiing, hunting, fishing, horseback riding, wildlife watching, visiting cultural sites and visitor centers, or just viewing the scenery and driving for pleasure. But the kinds of recreation the public wants are far more diverse than they were in the early 1900s. Think ziplining and snowboards, OHVs and snowmobiles, rafting trips or guided backcountry trips, with gourmet meals and llamas carrying everything but your daypack.

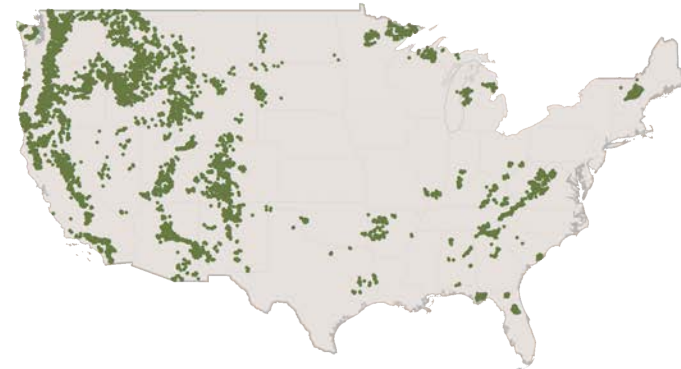


5000+  
campgrounds

10,000+  
developed sites

30,000+  
recreation areas

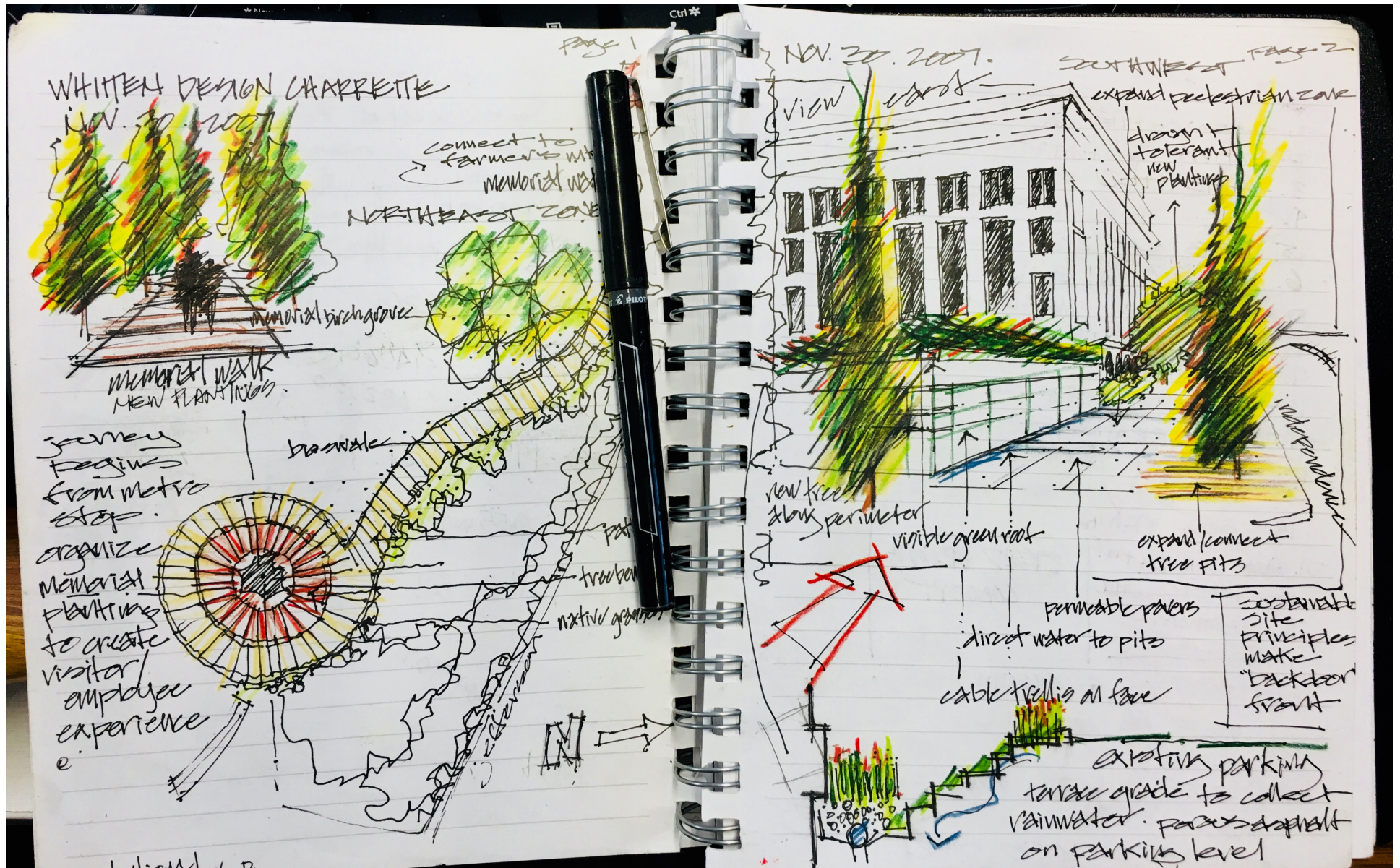
- **240 MILLION** Americans live within 100 miles of a National Forest or Grassland
- **115,000** activity locations
- **156,000** miles of trails
- **362,000** heritage sites
- **2 MILLION** acres of lakes
- **200,000** miles of fishable streams
- **36 MILLION** acres of wilderness
- **4.4 MILLION** camping reservations through Rec.gov since 2007
- **125** Wild and Scenic Rivers
- **136** National Scenic Byways covering **9,100** miles
- **60%** of all downhill skiing capacity in the U.S.



Matt Arnn and the 120+ landscape architects he leads, are responsible for planning and design of the Forest Service's National Forests, Monuments, Recreation Areas and Scenic Areas.

*From Matt's ASLA presentation "Landscape Architects as Federal Leaders."*





Matt's sketch book entries from the Peoples Garden design charrette at the USDA headquarters informed numerous federal sustainable landscape projects and investments around the country.





Matt's international work, as seen here in a concept design for the Buhoma Mountain Gorilla Visitor Center, Bwindi National Forest, Uganda, has helped developing countries better plan and manage increases in ecotourism and visitor recreation use.

# Designing and Managing Resilient Recreation Landscapes

Matt Arnn  
USDA Forest Service  
Washington, D.C.

Arnn, Matt. 2019. Designing and managing resilient recreation landscapes. In: Campbell, Lindsay K.; Svendsen, Erika; Sonti, Nancy Falxa; Hines, Sarah J.; Maddox, David, eds. Green readiness, response, and recovery: A collaborative synthesis. Gen. Tech. Rep. NRS-P-185. Newtown Square, PA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service: 144-155. <https://doi.org/10.2737/NRS-GTR-P-185-paper10>.

## Iconic Places of the U.S. Forest Service

Values, Conditions, Challenges, and Opportunities

AUTUMN ELLISON, ERIC M. WHITE, AND MATTHEW ARNN

SUMMER 2018



ECOSYSTEM WORKFORCE PROGRAM WORKING PAPER NUMBER 85



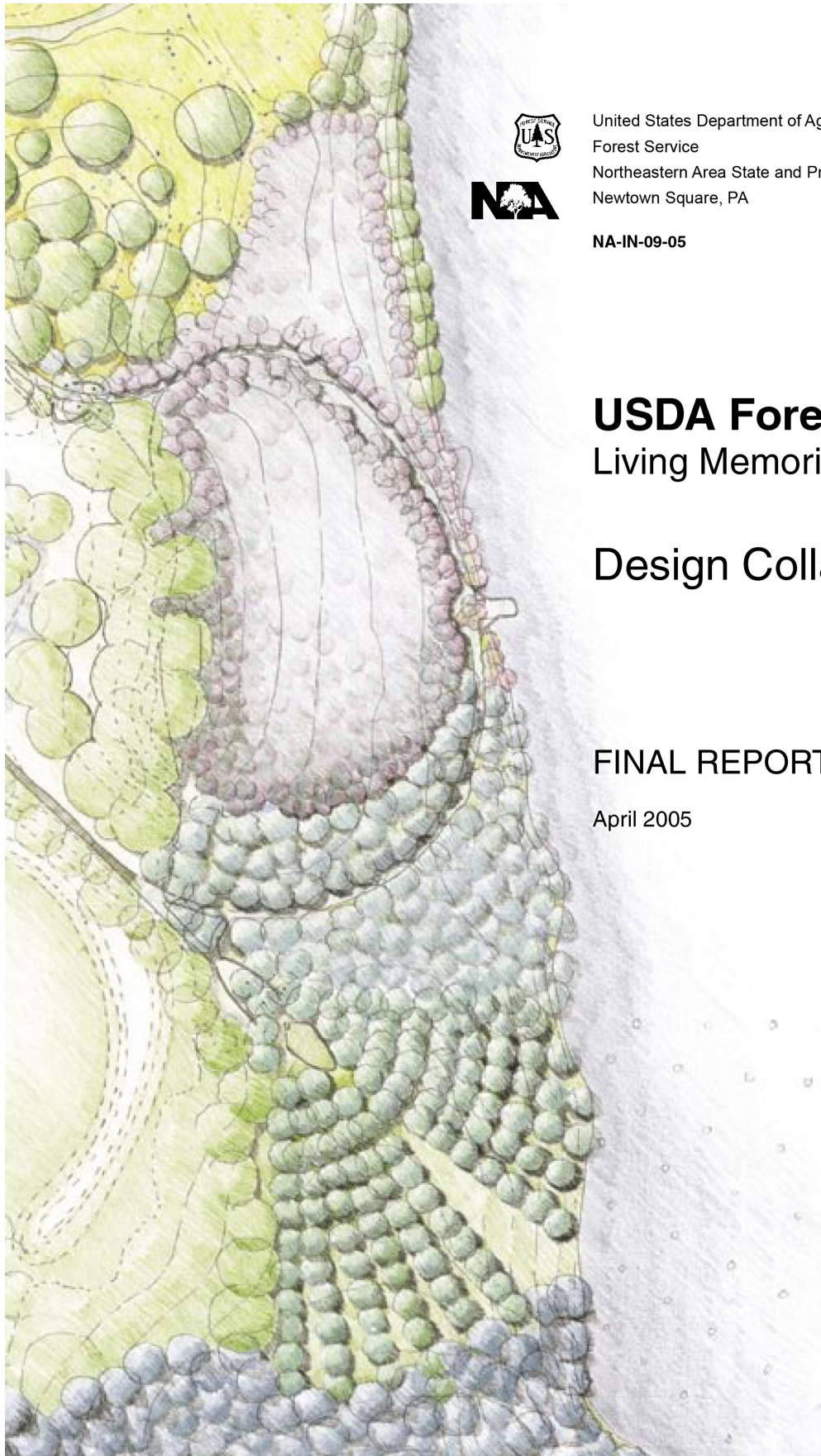
Matt's latest publications published by the USDA Forest Service in 2018 and 2019.





In New York City, Matt inspired students to be curious about natural resources, and the importance of public green spaces. He invited them to consider landscape architecture as a possible career.





United States Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry  
Newtown Square, PA

NA-IN-09-05

## **USDA Forest Service** Living Memorials Project

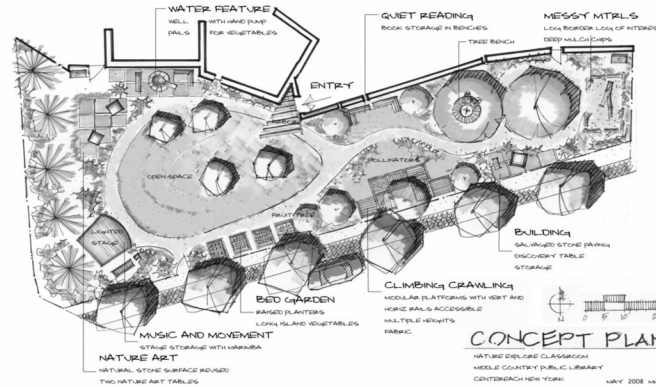
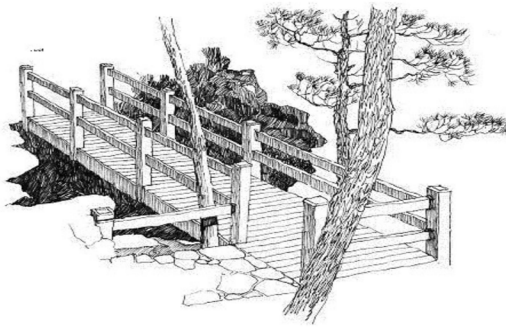
### Design Collaborative

### FINAL REPORT

April 2005

Matt's efforts with the Living Memorials Project, post September 11th, led to the creation of 50 new parks, memorials, and open spaces that helped communities heal and regain hope.





Sampling of Matt's and his team projects from around the National Forests and Grasslands.







Matt Arnn, ASLA  
Chief Landscape Architect

USDA Forest Service  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Washington, DC 20250

[matthew.arnn@usda.gov](mailto:matthew.arnn@usda.gov)

202-205-9599

Nominee Contact Details:



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**File Code:** 6270**Date:** February 3, 2021**Route To:****Subject:** LaGasse Medal Endorsement**To:** Bob Snieckus

I am proud to endorse the nomination of Matt Arnn for the ASLA LaGasse Medal. I've had the pleasure of working with Matt in his role as Chief Landscape Architect, and appreciate Matt's wisdom, passion, and leadership surrounding conservation and sustainability.

Matt leads the agency's 120+ landscape architects practicing on over 190 million acres of national forests and grasslands. The agency's landscape architects demonstrate a range of unique skillsets – from designing sites for government buildings that affect how others find meaning in their national forests, to collaborating with interdisciplinary teams and shaping national policy.

The scope, complexity, and implications of managing public lands require integrated and collaborative planning approaches. Matt has enlisted his landscape architecture skills to both promote, and perhaps more importantly, illustrate the value of implementing, holistic landscape planning and management.

Matt's work stresses the integration of social and ecological places and processes, creating physical points of entry and engagement for visitors to public lands. Matt has worked across the continent and abroad developing plans for visitor centers, trails, campgrounds, interpretation experiences, scenic overlooks, night sky viewing areas, and other recreation infrastructure.

Matt uses his landscape architecture skills to develop policy, guidance, and tools that ensure built environments and human uses are in harmony with, and ensure the protection of, both natural and cultural resources.

His influence is evidenced in national strategies such as the Forest Service Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Recreation Framework. Matt has also translated the broad goals and objectives of these strategies into agency policy and directives to ensure recognition and conservation of natural and cultural resources. Examples include policy related to surface mining and directives related to developed recreation site design, scenery management, and land management planning. His work after September 11, 2001 with the Forest Service Living Memorials Project led to the creation of over 50 new parks and open spaces to help affected communities regain traction through investment in their public places.

These and countless other contributions do not fully capture Matt's influence on the agency's shift to holistic planning and management approaches. Matt has been an ambassador of landscape architecture. He has worked with human resources to create a new interdisciplinary job series in which landscape architects are now eligible for positions traditionally held by



foresters and biologists. In addition, Matt has worked with several accredited universities to include curriculum related to public land management and recruit the next generation of landscape architects in the Forest Service. These efforts, in addition to his dedicated mentoring and advocacy, will ensure the agency is equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate future challenges and ensure sustainable outcomes.

Matt's work continues to affect the way that people find value and meaning in their national forests and grasslands and his legacy as our Chief Landscape Architect will benefit the Forest Service, our partners, and the public for many years to come.

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Signed by: ALLEN ROWLEY

ALLEN ROWLEY

Acting Deputy Chief, National Forest System

Ramiro Villalvazo, FASLA, PLA  
82420 Live Oak Canyon Drive  
Indio, CA 92201

January 31, 2021

LAGASSE MEDAL NOMINATIONS – Landscape Architect  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Re: Nomination of Matthew Arnn, ASLA – LaGasse Medal

To the ASLA Executive Committee and Board of Trustees:

It is my honor and pleasure to endorse the nomination of Matthew Arnn, for the ASLA LaGasse Medal. I met Matt in 2005, when he was serving as a landscape architect in New York City for Urban and Community Forestry of the USDA, Forest Service. He was serving as the coordinator of the Forest Service's Living Memorials Project in New York City. The project aimed at using the power of trees and green space to bring people together and create lasting, living memorials to the victims of terrorism and their families.

Later that year I visited New York to see first-hand how Matt was using his skills and passion to bring a piece of nature to heart of urban America. He was working with local community leaders and non-profit organizations to bring the curative merits of trees and gardens to the streets and rooftops of various boroughs in the City. I also observed Matt motivate a group of teenage students at a local arboretum as he spoke about the richness and impact of landscape architecture. I was impressed and inspired by Matt's desire to use every opportunity possible to advocate for natural resources, green space and our profession within the most populated square blocks of our Country.

For the last next fifteen years, I have watched Matt's efforts to make a difference for public lands, and natural resource management, including leading efforts to increase the diversity of landscape architect (LA) hiring within the Forest Service and open opportunities for LA's to serve in leadership positions. Matt was a key member of the committee that developed the Sustainable Sites Initiative Policy which is now the basis for developing sustainable sites under the LEED rating system. Matt is now working to actually "improve" how we take care of public lands by advocating for the development of LEED Sites guidance and policy into multi-discipline design guidance and standards within the Forest Service, which manages 191 million acres.

Through his vision, leadership and support, Matt has worked to ensure that changes made during forest planning "Rule-Making," which mandates how and what to consider in the management of every Forest and Grassland, incorporates concern and protections for scenic values, recreation planning and overall social values that contribute to people's health, benefits and welfare.

Through the many years of Matt's dedication to public service, he has worked to enhance and better whichever environment or setting he has had the opportunity to touch as a landscape architect (urban, rural, or natural). He has demonstrated our profession to be an essential and a powerful contributor to our world in protecting and managing natural resources and public lands.



So again and respectfully, I strongly and proudly support the nomination of Matt Arnn for the ASLA LaGasse Medal. It would be a double honor for me to share this award with my esteemed colleague.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ramiro Villalvazo', with a large, looping flourish above the name.

Ramiro Villalvazo, FASLA, PLA  
LaGasse Medal Recipient, Landscape Architect - 2014  
Retired USDA, Forest Service



03.Feb.21

LaGasse Medal Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

RE: Matthew Arnn, ASLA nomination for the LaGasse Medal

Dear Board of Trustees, American Society of Landscape Architects:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter in support of Matthew Arnn, ASLA for the LaGasse Medal. A nationally recognized landscape architect, Matt embodies the practice transformation that includes a more holistic definition of land conservation and public engagement. His work as chief landscape architect for the US Forest Service leads communities to a more equitable and resilient future.

I met Matt more than 25 years ago when he was director of the Waterfront Center. It was there he used his talents to help municipalities around the country in creating a sustainable vision for their urban waterfronts. He helped others to develop skills in community process and make a difference in their own backyards.

Matt's impact is local as well. In the early 2000's I began working with Matt on park and playground projects for underserved neighborhoods in Washington DC, efforts that continue to advance the cause of equity and inclusion in our green spaces. Matt brought resources as well as know-how, partnering with the White House Council on Environmental Quality and securing an NEA grant for the funding of local landscape and playground improvements. He inspired local residents and raised awareness about public landscapes. Because of his work people gained agency in their own living environments and learned valuable lessons in stewardship.

Matt is a thought leader, an inspiring educator, and a tireless advocate. His work influences the lives of thousands and built new constituencies for resource stewardship. He builds bridges between stakeholders from the public and private sector through programs like the Sustainable Landscape Partnership. Matt led inter-agency workshops that developed a master plan for the USDA headquarters on the National Mall in Washington DC. Plans include low impact development landscapes and a "People's Garden" with a farmer's market in America's front yard.

Matt's impact is international. On USAID-funded projects from Africa to the Middle East he built an impressive body of work that protects and enhances natural and cultural resources. In Uganda he led community charettes to develop a master plan for an eco-tourism center that conserves natural resources and provides income for the local economy. Plans honor the cultural landscape while also regenerating the natural habitat of endangered species. In Jordan he led workshops on learning landscapes which built capacity for the design of green schools in a water-stressed environment.

Matt's contributions to landscape design in the public interest and conservation of natural resources cannot be understated. I am grateful for the opportunity to share this recommendation with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Schneider", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Rick Schneider, AIA, LEED AP  
Principal, ISTUDIO Architects

February 4, 2021

American Society of Landscape Architects  
LaGasse Medal Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

RE: Nomination of Matt Arnn, Chief Landscape Architect, USDA Forest Service

It is an honor and pleasure to endorse the nomination of Matt Arnn, ASLA to receive the LaGasse Medal (Landscape Architect) for his innovative and exceptional work in landscape architecture, and his efforts to improve accessibility to nature, open space, and recreational opportunities for all Americans.

I first met Matt through his involvement in a project in New York City the USDA was developing as a part of a program called, The Urban Resources Partnership (URP). As Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment in the early days of the Clinton Administration, it was an initiative we launched to bring federal agencies together to improve access to nature and natural resources in major metropolitan areas across the United States. In New York City, our initial goal was to work with the New York City parks department, and local non-profit groups to improve access to parks and open space. As the effort evolved, Matt, who was then working for the Forest Service in its new Urban and Community Forestry program's New York office, suggested partnering with a wide range of organizations in the city. Two very notable ones were: The New York Restoration Project (NYRP), created by Bette Midler (singer, actress and honorary member of the American Society of Landscape Architects), and the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), created by Jack Dangermond, (a LaGasse Medal awardee in 2000).

Ironically, the Urban Resources Partnership rollout in New York City coincided with a controversial plan by the city's mayor to convert vacant lots and open spaces across the city to new high density housing projects. Those opposing the plan feared that the loss of open space would further impact opportunities for low-income, diverse, and disadvantaged communities in the city. Community leaders pleaded to preserve remaining open spaces for the use of residents that had begun to convert vacant lands to urban food gardens and recreation areas at their own expense. Community access to nature, green spaces, and the city's waterways were already limited, the proposed housing plan would make the problem much worse.

Matt suggested that we work through the URP program partners and with ESRI to use their GIS technology to identify, analyze, and map the remaining parks, gardens, open space, and water access across the city. The purpose was twofold. The first was to make city residents and advocates for open space, urban parks, nature, and outdoor recreation, aware of the existing open and accessible spaces as a way to build support for their protection and restoration. But the second, and most important, was to make ALL people across the city, regardless of race, ethnicity, income, and location, aware of the opportunities to enjoy nature, the outdoors, and the recreation opportunities in their own communities.




Matt and his colleagues then took this idea to ESRI and other partners across the city and explained the enormous value of this endeavor. The team's vision was so effective that Jack Dangermond committed staff in ESRI's New York City office to work on the project and to provide GIS technology at no cost. The result was [OASIS](#) – the Open Accessible Space Information System – allowing citizens to illustrate the values and opportunities of increasing open space and recreation to community members and planning officials. It was a successful early citizen science effort to prove the positive social and health benefits of increasing public open space in the most densely populated city in the United States.

Today, OASIS is managed by the Center for Urban Research at the City University of New York. It continues to be a partnership involving local and regional organizations, continued contributions by ESRI, and ongoing support of the USDA Forest Service's northeast region. With the OASIS mission to "provide the richest source of community maps for New York City - free and all in one place," it helps nonprofits, community groups, educators, students, public agencies, and local businesses develop a better understanding of their environment. The interactive maps of open spaces, property information, transportation networks, and a large and growing data set, is available for everyone to use and contribute. The OASIS website is guided by a collaborative partnership of private and public sector representatives. The partnership seeks to sustain an accessible information system that helps enhance the stewardship of open space so these areas are linked, diverse, and support sustainable programs and places for the benefit of all people, organisms, and ecosystems in and around New York City.

Today, a quarter century after its launch, issues of equal access, inclusion, and environmental justice are finally front and center and a high priority in the minds of most Americans. Matt Arnn recognized, in bringing to my attention and advocating for what became OASIS, that one key to providing equal access to the benefits of nature and the outdoors for all Americans was to simply make people aware of the opportunities to realize these benefits in their own neighborhoods and backyards. Matt deserves more than being recognized for simply coming up with and helping to create OASIS. Matt understood the importance of environmental justice, of equal access, and our obligation as public servants – in his role with the USDA Forest Service and mine as Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment at USDA – to provide citizens with the information and resources to become advocates for maintaining and improving the health of their communities through access to their parks, waterways, and open spaces.

For his pioneering leadership in demonstrating ways to support environmental justice via creative environmental design, I strongly encourage you to award Matt the ASLA's LaGasse Medal for exceptional work in the field of landscape architecture.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "J Lyons", with a stylized, flowing script.

James (Jim) Lyons

Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment - 1993 to 2001  
United States Department of Agriculture  
Washington, DC



## LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

1200 17TH STREET NW | SUITE 210 | WASHINGTON, DC 20036 | 202 331 7070 | [WWW.LAFFOUNDATION.ORG](http://WWW.LAFFOUNDATION.ORG)

February 3, 2021

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RE: ASLA LaGasse Medal Nomination for Matt Arnn, ASLA

Dear ASLA Executive Committee and Board of Trustees:

I am honored and delighted to offer my most enthusiastic support for the nomination of Matt Arnn for the ASLA LaGasse Medal.

I have known Matt in his various capacities at the USDA Forest Service since moving to Washington, DC in 2001, when I worked for a local environmental non-profit organization, Casey Trees, and then during my time at the Landscape Architecture Foundation (LAF).

Throughout that time, Matt has been a recognized leader as a landscape architect and advocate for forests, trees and landscapes by federal agencies and non-profit organizations. His work on the Forest Service Living Memorials Project after 9-11 generated over 50 parks and open spaces to help a nation heal. He was called on to lead special projects because of his landscape architecture skills and talents to facilitate strategic initiatives and help a non-landscape architecture audience visualize sustainable alternatives. His work with valuation of recreational resources intersected with LAF's focus on landscape performance. Matt was critical in showing the economic benefits of our forest service lands and recreational resources which was essential to their protection, use and maintenance.

Matt left an award-winning career in private practice to dedicate his talents to public service. As Chief Landscape Architect for the USDA Forest Service, Matt's leadership influences millions and millions of acres of land, millions and millions of people's lives, and billions of dollars in contracts. We are all the better for his talents, leadership and commitment to sustaining the health, diversity and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.

In addition, Matt cultivates a strong and supportive culture for the many landscape architects in the Forest Service ranks. For these many exceptional contributions, and the opportunity to promote the value of public practice, I recommend that Matt Arnn be awarded the 2021 ASLA LaGasse Medal.

Sincerely,

Barbara Deutsch, FASLA  
CEO