



Marine Environmental Research Institute

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MAINE ENVIRONMENTALIST DR. SUSAN SHAW TO RECEIVE PRESTIGIOUS AWARD

In the footsteps of aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart, anthropologist Margaret Mead, primatologist Jane Goodall, oceanographer Sylvia Earle, and 14 other illustrious women, Dr. Susan Shaw, Director of the Marine Environmental Research Institute (MERI) will become the 2011 recipient of the Society of Woman Geographers most prestigious award – The Gold Medal.

The society, founded in 1925, confers its highest award on a member whose original, innovative or pioneering contributions are of major significance in understanding the world's cultures and environment.

At their triennial meeting in Boulder Colorado on May 21 Dr. Shaw, a marine toxicologist, will be honored for her pioneering research on the toxic legacy of man-made chemicals in the ocean. Dr. Shaw's "Seals as Sentinels" project is MERI's signature research initiative on Gulf of Maine contaminants, and she is credited as the first scientist to show that flame retardants in consumer products have contaminated marine mammals and commercially important fish stocks in the northwest Atlantic Ocean.

In 2007 Dr. Shaw testified successfully in the Maine legislature against the use of the neurotoxic flame retardant, Deca. Maine became the second state in the U.S. to ban the use of Deca in consumer products.

An outspoken and influential voice on ocean pollution and human health, Dr. Shaw dove into the oil slick following the 2010 BP Gulf of Mexico oil spill to see first-hand its impact on marine life, and has helped to focus the national debate on the hazards of chemical dispersants. She subsequently launched Gulf EcoTox an independent investigation into the effects of oil and chemical dispersants in the food web. In 2010 Dr. Shaw was appointed to the U.S. Department of Interior Strategic Sciences Working Group, a 14-member team charged with assessing the BP oil spill's consequences and recommending policy actions.

"Toxic contaminants in the oceans are a threat to marine and human life whether they are coming from oil and dispersants or from the flame retardants in our couches and computers. The scale of damage may be different in the Gulf of

Maine and in the Gulf of Mexico , but we need to realize that polluting our oceans poses health risks to both people and wildlife,” said Dr. Shaw.

The National Audubon Society’s Women In Conservation Program is also recognizing Dr. Shaw’s accomplishments as a “Woman of The Gulf” at this year’s annual Rachel Carson awards luncheon May 23 in New York. The Audubon’s Women in Conservation Program honors women leaders whose work is crucial to the environmental movement.

“I am honored to be recognized by two outstanding organizations that appreciate the seriousness of the problem of ocean pollution and are drawing attention to the urgent need to find solutions,” said Dr. Shaw.

The Marine Environmental Research Institute, (MERI) located at 55 Main St. in Blue Hill, Maine, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting the marine environment and human health through scientific research and education. For more information visit MERI online at meriresearch.org.

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PHOTO CAPTIONS:

Dr. Susan Shaw diving in the BP spill oil slick near the Deepwater Horizon disaster site May 2010

Dr. Susan Shaw, Director Marine Environmental Research Institute