

Marianne Schmink Award for the Outstanding Dissertation in Tropical Conservation and Development 2009/2010



The selection committee for the Schmink Award has met and we are pleased to announce that __Tracy Van Holt__ has been selected as the inaugural recipient of the Marianne Schmink Award for the Outstanding Dissertation in Tropical Conservation and Development.

Dr. Van Holt completed her dissertation in Interdisciplinary Ecology under the supervision of Drs. Michael Binford and H. Russell Bernard. Her dissertation was entitled “The influences of landscape change on the nearshore ecosystem in southern Chile”. The selection committee was impressed by the scope and multidisciplinary nature of the dissertation, the close collaboration with stakeholders ranging from government agencies to fisheries cooperatives, and the way in which the dissertation fulfilled the TCD mission of bridging theory and practice to conserve biodiversity, promote sustainable resource use, and advance human well-being. Throughout her tenure at UF Dr. Van Holt was a dynamic member of the TCD community, a dedicated and innovative teacher, a prolific fundraiser, and a role model for her fellow students. Her research, approach, and dedication honor the legacy of TCD and Dr. Marianne Schmink.

For her dissertation Dr. Van Holt studied an important problem faced by Chilean fishers — though the quality of a key resource (the shellfish *Concholepas concholepas*, known as loco) was declining, fishers couldn’t easily move to harvest resources in different locations because of a fisheries management plan that restricted access to fishing grounds. In her pilot study, funded by a TCD grant, she identified that locos were economically the most important artisanal fishery in Chile, that loco quality was in decline, and that forest plantations were increasing. As a consequence of her work, the national government fisheries agency (SERNAPESCA) may offer fishers new management areas if the environmental quality of their particular area has declined extensively.

Dr. Van Holt, who is now an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at East Carolina University, will be presenting a seminar at a future date in the Center for Latin American Studies’ Colloquium Series.