

For the Love of Science — USGS Emeritus Scientists Receive Prestigious Awards at Geological Society of America Conference



Bureau: U.S. Geological Survey

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Retirement — for many, the word conjures images of traveling the world, spending time in the garden, and finally having time to live lifelong dreams without the 9-to-5 work schedule.

For some retired USGS employees, however, they are living their dream by continuing to make a difference through science. These accomplishments deserve to be recognized — especially since their volunteer salary leaves much to be desired.

Three accomplished USGS emeritus scientists recently garnered recognition from outside agencies for their important contributions to science at the 2010 Geological Society of America conference in Denver, Colo.



These three retired USGS scientists continue to live their dreams by making a difference through science. Members of [USGS' Scientist Emeritus Program](#), each recently received a prestigious awards at the same Geological Society of America conference. (From left, John Pojeta, recipient of the Paleontological Research Institution's Gilbert Harris Award; Mary Jo Baedecker, recipient of GSA's O.E. Meinzer Award; and Peter Lipman, recipient of GSA's Mineralogy, Geochemistry, Petrology, and Volcanology Division Career Achievement award.) Photo of Pojeta by Jennifer LaVista, USGS; photo of Baedecker and GSA's Scott Bair by Andrea Brookfield, GSA; and photo of Lipman by Ben Lipman.

USGS scientist emeritus John Pojeta won the Paleontological Research Institution's Gilbert Harris Award in recognition of career excellence in systematic paleontology. He has published almost 150 articles, all making a difference in the field of geology and paleobiology. Pojeta's main research interests are Lower Paleozoic mollusks, and he uses fossils to help solve geological and biological problems. His work has taken him across the globe in places such as Antarctica, Australia, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Senegal, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. However, his favorite location may be the significant geographic feature that's named after him, Pojeta Peak in the Ellsworth Mountains of Antarctica. This year, notably, celebrates Pojeta's 50th anniversary as a member of PRI.

USGS scientist emeritus Mary Jo Baedecker received GSA's O.E. Meinzer Award, which recognizes authors of papers that have significantly advanced the science of hydrogeology or some closely related field. Baedecker earned this year's award with three papers that set the groundwork for further studies in plume characterization and geochemical studies. She has spent more than 30 years of research on organic-inorganic processes that occur in aquifers impacted by the presence of contaminants. Her work has become standard reading within the organic geochemistry community. Baedecker finds it very gratifying that her papers have been used to teach students in universities, as she has a great interest in helping young people learn about geochemistry and hydrogeology.

USGS scientist emeritus Peter Lipman accepted GSA's first-ever Mineralogy, Geochemistry, Petrology, and Volcanology Division Career Achievement award. Lipman has gained international recognition for his research in volcanology and igneous petrology and for their significance to tectonics, economic geology, and volcano hazards. He was early to recognize the importance of plate tectonics on the makeup of Cenozoic Era volcanism in the western United States. Lipman's long-term fascination with Hawaiian volcanoes has brought him to study these volcanoes at their high peaks, as well as at their sea-floor depths. During volcanic crises he has been a leader in providing critical scientific data — especially during the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens. Lipman has also earned praise for his mentoring skills, passing on not only his approach to science but also his positive approach to living.

While these three retired USGS senior scientists' receiving prestigious awards at one conference is impressive, USGS has many scientists emeriti who receive recognition year round. One such emeritus is Walt Dean, who will receive the prestigious Twenhofel Medal in April 2011. This is the highest award one can receive from the Society for Sedimentary Geology. There are many emeriti who deserve recognition — if you would like to learn more about the emeritus program, visit the [USGS Scientist Emeritus website](#).

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Dec. 2, 2010