

**Presentation of the French and Mary Lu Wetmore
Award for Lifetime Achievement to Molly**

IAFSM Conference, March 8, 2022

ML = Mary Lu speaking FW = French speaking

ML We like the name of this award, but want to start by saying we are powerless as to who gets the award. We have nothing to do with who is selected. We just have the fun and easy job of giving it away.

FW We have really liked every one who has been selected in the past and we are most happy to see who is getting it this time.

ML This year's recipient already knows she's getting the lifetime achievement award. You know her, but you probably don't know all the things she's done.

FW Oops, you said "She." Now everyone knows it's a woman. Ah, but they don't know who she is. So we're going to keep the suspense going and just use her first name.

ML OK. Molly came from Michigan. She got a B.S. in civil engineering from Michigan State University in 1983.

FW I first met Molly when she worked for the Division of Water Resources. Soon after she started, she was sent to help out on disaster duty after the 1985 floods. After her assignment, on her own initiative, she wrote up a critique of how things could have been run better. Pretty brassy for this new kid who's supposed to stay quiet and watch her elders show her how it's done. I was impressed then and have been ever since.

ML After a few years at DWR, she left to consult for a bit. She also was in the Illinois Air National Guard where she rose to the rank of Captain. And met her husband Rob, a dashing Air Force fighter pilot.

FW In 1988, Molly was hired back to DWR to take one of the worst jobs in the Division. It was vacated by this bozo who left to work for a new consulting company named French & Associates. Not only did she take over all my mitigation work, she was responsible for starting a stormwater management program for the state.

ML Five years after she took over the state's flood mitigation program, Illinois was hit by one of the worst floods in its history. To meet the mitigation challenges, Governor Thompson created a new state interagency task force. Guess who was put in charge?

FW Molly. In a couple of years Molly and her crew managed ten times more acquisition projects than I did in my 12 years with DWR.

ML Did we tell you that Molly accomplished all of that as a part time employee because she was starting a family?

FW Did we tell you that Molly also served on the Community Rating System Task Force during this time? She was so impressive that FEMA tried to hire her away.

ML Instead, as if she wasn't busy enough and already had a great education, in 1995 Molly decided to take a leave of absence and get a master's degree. Did she go to some Podunk school where she could get easy As? No. She got a Master's in Public Administration from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Oh, and she took her entire family with her to Boston. Being a mother myself, I've so admired her for being able to juggle work and family.

FW After getting her degree, Molly decided she should take on the most challenging thing one could ever do: work for French & Associates.

ML She was with us for eight years, working part-time and raising three kids at the same time.

FW And we all say thank you Mary Lu for signing our paychecks. In 2005, Molly left French & Associates to start Molly ___Blank___ & Associates (can't say the last name so you still don't know who she is). She did a variety of local projects and worked part-time on CRS work. In 2014, I left as the Lead consultant for the CRS and Molly replaced me. I now work for her. Thank you Molly for signing our paychecks.

ML So, what has she done? She led the state's stormwater management program and helped the northeastern counties get their programs started. She has done many local mitigation plans and many more projects around the state, several of which have received awards. These have ranged from rural areas downstate to the Cook County mitigation plan and its floodplain management ordinance. For her mitigation work, she was given the IAFSM Mitigation Award in 2014.

FW She has been in charge of the technical aspects of the Community Rating System for the last seven years. Her fingerprints are on many of the state's floodplain management programs, mitigation programs, and stormwater management programs and the Community Rating System

ML Molly is a registered professional engineer and (most importantly) a Certified Floodplain Manager. She has also been recognized as a Diplomate Water Resources Engineer. I'm not sure what it means, but engineers say it's a really big deal.

FW When I got the Lifetime Achievement award, my first response was "lifetime achievement? But I'm not dead yet." When you see the Molly who is getting the award this year, you're gong to say "but she's not even old, yet."

ML Do we end the suspense and announce her full name?

FW I think we should. The 2022 French And Mary Lu Lifetime Achievement Award goes to

ML & FW Molly O'Toole