

Tony Thompson, Fifth Generation Minnesota Farmer, Recipient of 2009 Farmer-Rancher Pollinator Conservation Award ¹

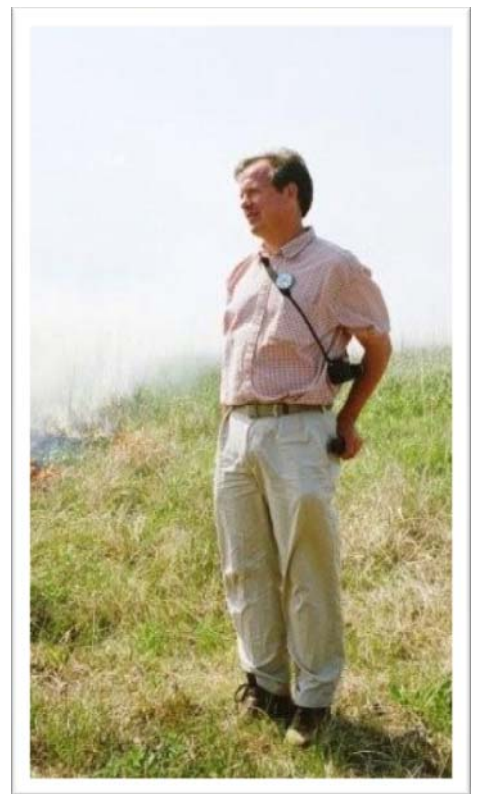
The North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) presented the 2009 **Farmer-Rancher Pollinator Conservation Award** to James Anthony “Tony” Thompson, a fifth generation farmer in southwestern Minnesota. The award was given as part of an international effort to promote public awareness about pollinators – birds, bees, bats, butterflies, beetles, and other pollinating animals that enable the reproduction of over 75 percent of flowering plants, accounting for as much as one-third of the nation’s food supply.

The award was presented at an agricultural pollinator reception on October 21, hosted by the American Farm Bureau at their Washington, DC headquarters. The reception kicked off the 9th Annual International NAPPC Conference, an annual meeting that brings together some of North America’s most prominent scientists, pollinator experts and concerned stakeholders, working together on consensus-based efforts for the benefit of pollinators.

Tony Thompson is a tireless and passionate advocate for sustainable agriculture, who is continuously seeking innovative methods to protect and restore native biodiversity on his farm while also earning a living from farming at the lowest cost to the land.

The Thompson farm is a model for how productive agriculture can operate in an environmentally sustainable - pollinator friendly - fashion. His openness to the natural resource conservation community provides an opportunity for positive dialogue between producers and conservationists. His leadership, example, compassion for farmer neighbors and friends, and outreach to the broader agricultural community lend credibility to conservation on private working lands.

Tony is a fifth generation farmer, producing primarily corn and soybeans on fertile land in southwestern Minnesota that has been owned by his family since 1876. The family farm is composed of 2000 acres of cropland and nearly 1400 acres of remnant prairie and wetlands. Wetlands and waterways are buffered with up to 600-ft wide bands of diverse, native grasses and forbs. Tony farms or otherwise manages in partnership an additional 1700 acres of cropland. The Thompson farm is situated in the Northern Tallgrass Prairie Region, where <1% of native habitats remain and restoration indigenous plant and animal communities is a regional and national priority (<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/northerntallgrass/>).



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- Croplands are cultivated using a ridge-till system that minimizes tillage and pesticide use, leaving residue in place to reduce runoff, protect soils, and potentially provide habitat for ground-nesting native bees.
- Wide buffers composed of diverse, local ecotype prairie grasses and wildflowers are used by rare, habitat-sensitive butterflies (e.g., regal fritillary).
- Over 200 species of prairie grasses and wildflowers occur on native prairie remnants. Thousands of acres of reconstructed tallgrass prairie have been established with seed harvested from these tracts.
- Since 1998, organized and hosted the annual Agroecology Summit – a meeting of 70-100 farmers and land managers, university faculty and students, and government and NGO representatives to discuss topics ranging from agronomic issues such as cover crops, water quality, tillage practices, and nutrient cycling to biological diversity.



The NACD-NAPPC Farmer-Rancher Pollinator Conservation Award, initiated in 2006, recognizes an individual or family in the farm and ranch community in the U.S. who has contributed significantly to pollinator species protection and conservation on working and wild lands. NAPPC and NACD encourage further pollinator conservation stewardship through their recognition of the award winners.

The multi-colored, cut-glass award features a hummingbird, bees and a butterfly and was designed by artist James Randolph, whose previous work includes the Air and Space Museum's Challenger Tribute.

NAPPC is managed by the Pollinator Partnership (P2), a nonprofit organization headquartered in San Francisco, California. P2's mission is to catalyze stewardship of biodiversity. P2 places a high priority on efforts to protect and enhance animal pollinators (*invertebrates, birds and mammals*) and their habitats, encouraging policies and practices that better "Share" our landscapes, on both working and wild lands. More information about P2/NAPPC is available at <http://www.pollinator.org/>.

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) represents America's 3,000 conservation districts, which are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs at the local level. Districts work with millions of cooperating landowners and operators to help them manage and protect land and water resources on all private lands and many public lands in the United States. More information about NACD is available at <http://www.nacdnet.org/>.