

February 7, 2024

## LaGasse Medal Nominations

c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

RE: Jeff Caster, FASLA

**“...conservation of land and conservation of people frequently go hand in hand.”**

*Eleanor Roosevelt*

### **Introduction**

It is with great honor that we submit this nomination of Jeff Caster, FASLA, for consideration of the 2024 ASLA LaGasse Medal. For more than three decades, Jeff has been a strong and fearless champion in the management and conservation of public lands in the State of Florida and across the nation. His contributions are wide ranging, and the impacts of his commitment to the environment have touched the lives of millions of people. During his long and illustrious career with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), he was responsible for the management of over 186,000 acres of public right-of-way in the State of Florida. Jeff was also instrumental in the creation of the Florida Wildflower Foundation and is an international authority on prescribed burns. He was one of the first, and often the only Landscape Architects selected to develop national landscape and environmental design standards for transportation related projects, and he has single handedly educated countless Landscape Architects, Engineers, and agency officials on the significant value of public landscapes. Even in retirement, Jeff’s unwavering commitment to the management and conservation of our public lands continues to this day. In February 2024, he was the only Landscape Architect to testify before the Florida State Legislature on the importance of protecting our public landscapes. As noted by Mrs. Roosevelt in the quote above, Jeff’s dedication to service transcends his commitment to the land alone. His generous efforts to support and mentor those in his community, the many communities he is involved with, have forged a remarkable and enduring legacy. **Jeff Caster’s career and selfless contributions provide ASLA with a recipient who truly embodies the spirit of the LaGasse Medal.**

*Jeff Caster’s career,” ...epitomizes the essence of the LaGasse medal not only through his tireless service managing and conserving the natural resources of our most ubiquitous landscape – public right-of-way – but through his foresight to institutionalize solutions that ensure environmental resilience is built into the public landscape of our roadways and urban streets.”*

*Wendy Miller, FASLA  
ASLA Past President*

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### ***Professional Career with the Florida Department of Transportation***

Jeff spent the entirety of his almost 30-year professional career with FDOT. During that time, he was responsible for the management and conservation of over 186,000 acres of managed public right-of-way that crisscross the State of Florida.

Early in his tenure, as one of only a handful of Landscape Architects employed by the FDOT, Jeff identified a need for change. He personally embarked on a series of statewide educational tours, meeting with administrative officials, Engineers, Landscape Architects, and community leaders to educate them on the natural virtues of Florida's roadside landscapes. His mission was to cultivate consensus by educating various colleagues and overcoming longstanding professional misunderstandings, prejudices, and antiquated processes that had developed in the Department's culture. Jeff developed new standards for the agency such as the State's first *Highway Beautification, Landscape and Plan Review Procedure* which required each of the Department's eight Districts to employ a District Landscape Architect. He artfully crafted language to upgrade Florida State Statutes, Florida Administrative Code, the *FDOT Engineering and CADD Manual*, the *Plans Preparation Manual*, the *Utility Accommodation Manual*, and the *Project Management Manual*. He led interdisciplinary teams in the creation of FDOT's *Landscape Installation Design Standards* and *Landscape Installation Standard Specifications*. As the State's landscape program grew, Jeff recognized that few Landscape Architects understood the unique complexities of the FDOT's processes, engineering

*Jeff's contributions to the Florida Department of Transportation and the State of Florida were recognized when he was selected from over 10,000 employees and named as the 2006 FDOT Role Model of the Year.*

design standards, and plans preparation requirements. He again embarked on a series of educational tours and conducted training seminars throughout the State. Jeff took it upon himself to educate those around him on the importance of our public landscapes whenever a speaking opportunity arose. Over the years Jeff's educational sessions have resulted in thousands of Landscape Architects, Transportation Engineers, and agency officials being educated on the benefits and virtues of roadside landscapes in the State of Florida.

In 2007, the State's Transportation Secretary signed the agency's first *Highway Beautification Policy* outlining three long term goals for the Department. Jeff was instrumental in crafting and writing the language that emphasized the conservation of our public right-of-way and identified the investment value of these efforts. Through the development of this policy, FDOT shared ownership of the program and now every employee and consultant, who works for FDOT is explicitly responsible for the conservation of natural resources and scenic beauty of these public lands. Jeff's professional dedication to serving the state has singlehandedly changed the internal culture of the Department's relationship with our State's public lands.

For the last 20 years of his professional career, Jeff served as the State Transportation Landscape Architect. In this role, he guided the Department's landscape program through a period of unprecedented growth. Under his leadership, funding for the program grew from less than \$3,000,000/year to over \$50,000,000/year. The program's expansion made FDOT one of the foremost purchasers of nursery landscape materials in the State, simultaneously establishing it as one of the largest consumers of professional landscape architectural services in the State. With his increasing involvement, Jeff recognized the need to improve relationships between these two allied industries. He understood the value of bringing these groups together to foster a more symbiotic relationship and strengthen the landscape industry as a whole. That relationship has withstood the test of time and because of his efforts, the

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Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) recognized Jeff with the **2020 FNGLA Friend of the Industry Award**. It is the first and only time FNGLA has presented this award to a Landscape Architect.

Since transportation projects are some of the largest construction projects in the State, Jeff led the Department's efforts to provide meaningful opportunities in environmental design. He was often called upon by Transportation Engineers and other Landscape Architects to help avoid, minimize, mitigate, and where possible, enhance the adjacent right-of-way environment for large-scale projects. With his experience leading one of the largest landscape programs in the State, Jeff was often asked to assist principal investigators from State Universities on research projects involving biological control of exotic invasive plants; the relocation of endangered plants; the restoration and management of native plants; scenic highway designations; and/or the propagation and care of roadside wildflowers. Jeff has worn many hats throughout his professional career because many of the environmental initiatives were new to FDOT and successful implementation of these programs was dependent upon his leadership.

Over the course of his lengthy career with the FDOT, Jeff Caster managed and transformed the State of Florida's landscape program from a small with limited funding to an exponentially larger and more holistic program. Program funding grew to over \$50,000,000/year and the funding became rooted in State Statute. His advocacy for these roadside landscapes has not only enhanced the State highway system and the communities we call home, but when coupled with his educational endeavors, heightened awareness and appreciation for the profession of landscape architecture among Floridians and visitors alike. Jeff was recognized for his significant contributions to the State of Florida and the FDOT when he was selected from more than 10,000 employees and named the **2006 FDOT Role Model of the Year**.

#### **National Advocacy for Transportation Landscape Architecture**

Jeff has been instrumental in the development of a national *Landscape and Environmental Design Guide* for the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). His efforts to establish national management and conservation programs to control invasive species on our nation's public lands have proven impactful across the country. In addition, while developing and leading these programs, Jeff has also led the charge in educating generations of Landscape Architects and Engineers on their uniquely situated responsibilities to protect these public lands.

*"I see the ongoing results of research based on Jeff's years of proactive and forward-thinking leadership at Florida DOT. At the helm of a large transportation organization, his connections to the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) provided opportunities to spread his innovative work to a wider audience."*

*Willson McBurney, ASLA, PLA  
Chair, TRB Standing Committee on Landscape and  
Environmental Design*

Jeff was appointed to the Landscape and Environmental Design Committee of the Transportation Research Board within the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine. As one of eight panelists on the National Academy's National Cooperative Highway Research Program panel, Jeff played a key role in overseeing the development of a national *Landscape and Environmental Design Guide*. He contributed to various aspects of the project, including defining project scope, selecting the principal investigator, and reviewing and critiquing submittals for both the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The guide has influenced transportation Landscape Architects and Planners ever since.

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At one time, Jeff was the only Landscape Architect in the country selected for membership on the Transportation Research Board Landscape and Environmental Design Committee and the AASHTO Technical Committee on Environmental Design.

### ***Wildflower Advocacy***

During Jeff's career with the FDOT he was responsible for carrying on the Department's long-standing commitment to the planting and maintenance of native wildflowers along our Florida roadways. As a result, Jeff threw the passion he is known for into the program and became one of the southeast's leading wildflower enthusiasts and experts. His contributions include the support for a regional ecotype project and the fostering of a wildflower seed growers cooperative. He also founded and became Vice Chair of the Florida Wildflower Foundation where he organized and activated interdisciplinary members from ASLA Florida, the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, The Florida Native Plant Society, the Association of Florida Native Nurseries, and FDOT. His contributions over the past several decades of service were recognized as he was honored as the recipient of the **Florida Wildflower Foundation's 2020**

"Jeff's leadership is simply too significant to quantify. He has developed groundbreaking environmental policies, led the State of Florida's landscape program to become one of the largest in the nation, and has educated countless transportation professionals on the importance of our public landscapes. I can think of no one more deserving of this esteemed award than Jeff Caster."

*Ken Cheek, PLA  
FDOT District 2, District Landscape Architect*

**Coreopsis Award.** The award is presented for making the State of Florida "a more beautiful and environmentally sustainable place to live" and is the highest recognition conferred by the Florida Wildflower Foundation.

### ***Prescribed Fire***

For more than a decade, Jeff contributed his expertise to the North Florida Prescribed Fire Council, eventually assuming the role of Chair for the 200-member organization from 1997 to 1999. He initiated and implemented the State's first Smoke Management and Highway Safety agreement between the FDOT, the Florida Highway Patrol, and the Division of Forestry. This agreement established prescribed burn protocols for maintaining

motorist safety and visibility. Jeff made a presentation to the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CLARB), challenging Landscape Architects to study the natural role of fire and be accountable for designs that should address fire as much as wind and water. The editor of Landscape Architecture Magazine (LAM) heard Jeff's presentation and the January 2000 edition of LAM included an article based in part on his paper. Internationally, Jeff is recognized as an expert in roadside prescribed burning, and he was selected to represent ASLA as a speaker at the National Wildland/Urban Interface Fire Conference in 2004.

### ***Service to the Profession***

Esteemed by Landscape Architects of all ages, Jeff is widely regarded as a mentor within the profession. He is held in the highest esteem and has been a guiding force for ASLA Florida throughout his career, quietly providing encouragement, knowledge, and perspective for generations of chapter leaders. He served as a member of the Chapter's Executive Committee for well over a decade and has served in almost every role imaginable including Committee Chair, Section Chair, Member at Large, President and Trustee. Jeff's impact on the Chapter is part of his legacy as he set the standard for chapter leadership. To this day he is quick to offer his guidance and support to chapter leaders should the need arise. As Mrs. Roosevelt noted, "...conservation of land and conservation of people

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frequently go hand in hand.” Jeff’s contributions to the people, and to the profession of landscape architecture were recently recognized when he was honored with the **2023 Jeffery Siegal Leadership Award** from ASLA Florida.

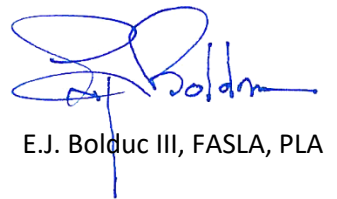
**Summary**

Thank you for your consideration of Jeff Caster’s nomination for the 2024 ASLA LaGasse Medal. We genuinely believe his contributions to the management and conservancy of our nation’s natural resources make him a perfect fit for this prestigious award. His passion for the land can be seen through his commitment and significant accomplishments; his fingerprints can be seen on the best our State and national highways have to offer; and his educational efforts have provided a living legacy of disciples to continue his work in the conservation and management of our public landscapes.

Sincerely,



Laurie F. Hall, ASLA, PLA



E.J. Bolduc III, FASLA, PLA

February 21, 2023

The Executive Committee and Board of Trustees  
The American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

Nomination of Jeff Caster, FASLA, for the LaGasse Medal

Dear Members of the ASLA Executive Committee and Board of Trustees,

It is with great pleasure that I support the nomination of Jeff Caster, FASLA, for the 2023 LaGasse Medal for Landscape Architects. Jeff's career, spanning over three decades with the Florida Department of Transportation, epitomizes the essence of the LaGasse Medal not only through his tireless service managing and conserving the natural resources of our most ubiquitous landscape – the public right-of-way – but through his foresight to institutionalize solutions that ensure environmental resilience is built into the public landscapes of our roadways and urban streets.

I first met Jeff in the early 2000s while serving together on the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Landscape and Environmental Design Committee. Established in 1932, the Committee is the oldest in TRB with the charge to design and manage roadsides that are productive, restorative, and sustainable as environmental and economic assets and to develop approaches to keep roadside ecology, climate change, and energy concerns in mind. Throughout his over ten years of service, Jeff was a pivotal member of the Committee acting in multiple roles as an influential State Transportation Landscape Architect for one of the largest departments in the country; as the only landscape architect on the engineering dominated AASHTO Technical Committee on Environmental Design; and as an expert panel member on the National Highway Cooperative Research Program (NCHRP) update of the Guide for Transportation Landscape and Environmental Design and Evaluation of Methodologies for Visual Impact Assessments (VIA). The timing of Jeff's participation in these important NCHRP studies was critical with the new national push to reimagine transportation corridors as multimodal while addressing the environmental justice issues manifested over previous generations of highway focused transportation funding and implementation.

Jeff was the leader needed to seize the moment. Through the development of a new AASHTO Guide in 2011, and the creation of streamlined VIA methodologies to implement effective aesthetic considerations into the project development process in 2013, Jeff collaborated with his DOT counterparts across the country to begin integrating context-sensitive approaches to project development at both the system and project level. More importantly, Jeff understood

and championed the need to overhaul the public involvement process to truly engage and include underserved communities. Likewise, his work in Florida researching and implementing roadside environments that supported pollinator species through wetland creation, wetland restoration, and improved ecological functions spread to a national and international audience. When Jeff hosted the 2007 TRB annual mid-year meeting in Fort Lauderdale, he attracted a diverse group of landscape architects, ecologists and transportation professionals to share innovative research and practices in stormwater management and reclamation, fire mitigation, protection of fragile ecosystems, climate resilience, and cultural resource conservation that set the stage for new crosscutting research work.

As a public practitioner, I have tremendous respect for Jeff's persistence and reach as a transportation landscape architect supporting this subset of the profession. His impact is extraordinary and continues with the numerous landscape architects and other professionals throughout the United States and the world he has encouraged and supported over the years. Jeff's outreach continues through his teaching, mentoring, and ongoing nurturing of students at Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, a Historically Black College and University, and his steadfast advocacy for funding research and use of wildflowers and pollinators in the public right of ways.

Jeff Caster is a landscape architect with a life-long commitment to serving the public good through his passionate belief in using the special skills and knowledge of landscape architecture to push from within, take bold actions, and to shape a more sustainable world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wendy Miller". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "W" and a long, sweeping tail.

Wendy Miller, FASLA

February 21, 2023

The Executive Committee and Board of Trustees  
The American Society of Landscape Architects  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001

**RE: Nomination of Jeff Caster, FASLA, for the LaGasse Medal**

Dear Members of the ASLA Executive Committee and Board of Trustees,

I am honored to support the nomination of Jeff Caster, FASLA for the LaGasse Medal for his years of service as a landscape architect influencing the functional, ecological, and aesthetic well-being of the transportation infrastructure in Florida and beyond.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on [Landscape and Environmental Design Committee](#), part of the National Academies Transportation Research Board, I see the ongoing results of research based on Jeff's years proactive and forward-thinking leadership at Florida DOT. At the helm of a large transportation organization, his connections to the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) provided opportunities to spread his innovative work to a wider audience.

Serving as the State Transportation Landscape Architect at the Florida Department of Transportation, Jeff guided Florida's DOT landscape architecture unit through years of unparalleled growth and development while breaking new ground in collaborative processes with engineers and maintenance personnel to create a more beautiful and resilient landscapes. In this position, Jeff elevated the role for landscape architects in the development of policies and strategies to implement practical solutions for integrating context sensitive design, innovative stormwater management and sustainable planting schemes and maintenance plans that have become a model for Transportation Departments throughout the United States.

Jeff developed the Department's first *Highway Beautification, Landscape and Plan Review Procedure* which required each of the State's eight districts to employ a District Landscape Architect. Following that effort, he led interdisciplinary teams in the creation of the FDOT's *Landscape Installation Design Standards* and *Landscape Installation Standard Specifications*. In doing so, he artfully crafted language to upgrade state statutes, administrative laws, the *FDOT Engineering and CADD Manual*, *Plans Preparation Manual*, the *FDOT Utility Accommodation Manual*, and the *FDOT Project Management Manual*.

Jeff has mentored and supported a community of transportation landscape architects on both an international and national level. He has successfully influenced and guided national research programs that have made his home state of Florida a national leader in transportation innovation and a model to all other states. Jeff understands the importance of creating safe



transportation facilities while preserving sensitive ecosystems and providing sustainable, attractive vegetated buffers to store and manage increasingly severe flooding endemic in communities throughout the country.

Some don't know that for more than 10 years Jeff was an adjunct assistant professor of landscape architecture at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida. There he taught young minds the art of planting design, utilizing native plants as a major focus of his lessons. Jeff's desire to educate youth in the proper design with, and management of, native plants is an outcome of his of the time he spent on the Standing Committee on Landscape and Environmental Design. His influence [locally](#), [nationally](#) and [internationally](#) is shown in the publications he has been a part of and the media surrounding the topics of native plants and wildflowers.

Jeff's service to the Florida Wildflower Foundation and chair role of the Foundation's Planting and Conservation Committee has garnered him the organization's [highest honor](#) the Coreopsis Award. If not for Jeff's dedication to the cause of the Foundation, it may not even exist.

As someone who has worked alongside Jeff Caster during his tenure at the FDOT, I have witnessed his influence on many. And as a fellow Boilermaker, I am proud to nominate Jeff for the LaGasse Medal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Willson S. McBurney', with a large exclamation point at the end.

**Willson S. McBurney, PLA, ASLA**

Chair, [TRB Standing Committee on Landscape and Environmental Design \(AKD40\)](#)

Vice President and Senior Landscape Architect, Moffatt & Nichol



February 28, 2023

LaGasse Medal Nominations  
c/o Honors and Awards  
636 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20001-3736

**RE: *The Lagasse Medals – Letter of Endorsement – Jeff Caster, PLA, FASLA***

Dear ASLA Executive Committee and Board of Trustees,

It is my honor and privilege to submit this Letter of Endorsement for the LaGasse Medal on behalf of Jeff Caster, PLA, FASLA. In Jeff's capacity as the former State Transportation Landscape Architect to the Florida Department of Transportation, he was responsible for advocating the management and conservation of the state's nearly 186,000 acres of roadside natural resources and landscapes through his management of the statewide Highway Beautification and Scenic Highways programs.

Of the numerous projects the Department implemented on the state roadway system throughout his tenure, Kimley-Horn had the privilege to collaborate with Jeff to execute his vision in a purposeful and meaningful manner. In my capacity as President of our firm, I have traveled across the United States to meet with countless transportation agency leaders and professionals. I am proud to attest that because of his vision, Florida has become the preeminent model that others seek to emulate.

For over three decades, Jeff championed the conservation and management of natural resources and landscapes within the Department, advocating the policy of the Florida Constitution to promote the conservation and protection of natural resources and scenic beauty throughout the state. With an unbridled passion, he promoted an authentic multidisciplinary approach spanning the planning, design, and construction of the state's transportation system that embodied the requirements of this policy. The results of Jeff's legacy within the Department are visible through his shaping of statewide program initiatives including the Highway Beautification, Scenic Highways, and Wildflower programs. As a result, Floridians and visitors are treated to the uniquely conserved and managed roadside natural resources and landscapes that constitute the modern 'La Florida.' When you stop to consider that Florida has a population of over 21 million people and annual visitors in excess of 138 million, you realize that Jeff's impact is of global significance.

My first encounter with Jeff occurred in the earliest years of my landscape architecture career while pursuing my bachelor's degree when he served as my graduate teaching assistant. Since that time nearly 30 years ago, I have been inspired by his sphere of influence within the Department and beyond its walls to shape policy and practice with enviable rigor and relentless passion. I have witnessed the manifestation of his influence among the landscape architects that I collaborate with at Kimley-Horn. Through my conversations with these professionals, they seem to share a common story of how Jeff has shared his passion and imparted his philosophy upon them.

External to the Department, he nurtured generations of landscape architects, engineers, and planning practitioners through a range of educational speaking engagements. His passion for promoting the

management and conservation philosophy mindset has been shared among thousands of transportation professionals at annual conferences including the Department's annual Transportation Symposium as well as through continuing education opportunities. Through these engagements Jeff promoted the importance of balancing the ever-growing demand for increased transportation capacity with the intrinsic qualities of Florida's roadside character. His approach was to ensure that thoughtful management and conservation of natural resources and scenic beauty became everyone's business – not merely his or other landscape architects – but all design professionals. Jeff had a way of a converting the skeptics to see that transportation goals and conservation goals are not mutually exclusive and that management and conservation of our natural resources are essential.

Executive Committee members and Trustees, I graciously request that the American Society of Landscape Architects bestow the LaGasse Medal upon Mr. Caster for his relentless commitment to ensure the management and conservancy of Florida's roadside natural resources and landscapes.

Respectfully,



Steve Lefton, PLA, FASLA, AICP  
President & CEO  
Kimley-Horn



North Carolina  
Department of  
Transportation  
LTS-HIGHWAY  
SAFETY/CONSTRUCTION  
PROJECT CONCEPT PLAN

Partnership with  
CDOT and SCRAP, Inc.

- Funds five lanes I-85
- Reopened in 1972
- Over 200 employee stations
- Multi-Occupancy lanes: Express, Pooled, Surgeon, Limited Access
- Corporate Office based in Fort Lauderdale



North Carolina

North Carolina










AASHTO Technical Committee on Environmental Design and Friends

Jeff, Win, Bob, Greg V. Karen, Dan, Susan, Shane, Keith, Tim S., Greg A., Mariano, Bill, Tony, Ken, Ben, Pete  
St. Augustine, April 19, 2006



A man with grey hair and a mustache, wearing a white short-sleeved button-down shirt and dark shorts, stands to the right of a stone monument. The monument is built from rough-hewn grey and tan stones and features a rectangular plaque with a dark border. The plaque contains text in all caps and a title in a larger font. The background is filled with dense green trees and foliage.

IN APPRECIATION OF OUR FOUNDER,  
LADY BIRD JOHNSON, WHOSE LOVE OF NATURAL  
BEAUTY HAS LEFT A TIMELESS IMPRINT UPON THE  
AMERICAN LANDSCAPE FOR THE BENEFIT AND  
ENJOYMENT OF THIS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS,  
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS HEREBY PROUDLY AND  
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATES THE NATIONAL  
WILDFLOWER RESEARCH CENTER'S NEW FACILITY  
AS THE

**Lady Bird Johnson  
Wildflower Center**

MARCH 31, 1995

**Nominee Contact Info:**

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(850) 294-2123

[jeffcaster110@gmail.com](mailto:jeffcaster110@gmail.com)

Retired, Florida Department of Transportation