David Walker, PAg – Distinguished Agrologist Award

David Walker PAg is a consultant, researcher and educator, specializing in revegetation and erosion control. His clients over 40 years include all levels of government, parks, energy industries, ski industry, and NGOs. He developed curriculum and taught courses on revegetation, wind and water erosion control, restoration of native plant communities, environmental inspection, spill site remediation, and naturalized urban landscapes for the University of Calgary, University of Alberta, Petroleum Industry Training Service, International Erosion Control Association, and numerous short courses for government, industry, and NGOs.

David grew up in Lacombe, a few blocks from the Canada Agriculture Research Station, where he began working summers when he was 14. David enrolled in agriculture at the University of Alberta and completed B.Sc., M.Sc., and PhD degrees. His graduate work on the genetics of native grasses required field work throughout Alberta's mountains and foothills. He demonstrated, contrary to prevailing opinion, that seed production was possible in commercial quantities and that tested ecotypes could thrive in harsh conditions at many locations. David's seed collection was donated to the ARC Environmental Centre in Vegreville.

Throughout his career, David has served on Boards and committees of local and international organizations, organizing conferences, giving presentations and publishing conference proceedings. David's interest in promoting the use of native plants led to his service as mitigation planner and expert witness for major industrial projects and as advisor to government on revegetation policies and guidelines.

David has worked with some clients for decades, but none match the 45 years of experience at the Lake Louise Ski Area. He specified construction protocols, designed mitigation measures, and afterwards, monitored the reconstruction of soils and recovery of native plant communities. From this knowledge, he developed criteria for measuring reclamation success that was used in the Mountain Parks for 30 years. With further refinements that combined both pre- and post-construction monitoring criteria and defined indicators, a system of measuring reclamation success through ecological functionality emerged. The method has been vetted through regulatory hearings on large projects and by efforts of a UC EVDS graduate student and his steering committee overseeing his thesis on method to assess reclamation success on ski hills in the Rocky Mountain National Parks.