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Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame to Induct Three Legends in 2023

The Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame will be inducting three people into their 2023 class of legendary individuals. This recognition is bestowed on those that have spent a great share of their lives promoting, educating, and sharing their passion for fresh water fishing in a manner that positively impacts the sport for the millions of anglers around the world. There are many who love to fish, but few that can be considered Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Famers.

Karen Eppinger (Michigan)

The Eppinger tradition began in 1906 when Lou Eppinger began fishing with a lure of his own design; a spoon weighing two ounces. The metal was hammered out so that it was thinner in the middle and thicker toward the edges. By 1912, Lou turned his prototype into a finished lure, the Osprey. It caught fish; lots of them. In 1918, Lou's nephew Ed came to work in his uncle's shop. They changed the name of the Osprey to Dardevle and that name is still used for Eppinger's most successful line of lures.

In 1987, Ed's daughter, Karen, took over at the helm of Eppinger Manufacturing and has been instrumental in successfully leading the company into the 21st century. In 1994, Karen was joined by her daughter Jennifer Bustamante, keeping this remarkable family-owned tradition alive. Eppinger celebrated its 100 year milestone in 2006 as the leading company and innovator of high-quality fishing lures.

Over the years, Karen filled many roles, from tying bucktails and feathers, working booths at sports shows and fishing in tournaments. She is proud that the company has always been a family business, and she's even more pleased that it continues to be based in Michigan. Eppinger Manufacturing is one of only a few manufacturers to still make their lures in the United States and according to Karen Eppinger, "We build performance, value and tradition into each and every Dardevle lure,"

Stan Moberly (Arkansas)

Stan Moberly has contributed to freshwater fishing in many ways, but his greatest achievement has been his outstanding leadership in making habitat conservation a major part of freshwater fisheries conservation programs at the state and federal levels. For decades, fisheries management was dominated by stocking hatchery reared fish and managing fishing harvest levels. Stan saw that habitat was a huge missing piece of the management puzzle, not to be left to EPA and state water quality agencies. He became a nationally recognized beacon for making habitat conservation a primary priority for state and federal fisheries natural resource agencies.

Early in his career, starting in 1970 in Alaska, he worked as a research biologist for the Alaska Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. Throughout his 17 years with the state of Alaska, Stan pursued his passion for abundant fisheries and healthy habitat. In those positions, he focused on identifying and fixing the harmful effects of timber clear-cutting practices in the Tongass National Forest on some of the most productive salmon streams in the nation, the downturn in herring populations associated with pulp mill discharges into coastal waters and promoting the need to conserve adequate instream flows in rivers and water levels in lakes and reservoirs which were being damaged by withdrawals from mining, pulp mills and other industries.

It was in Alaska that Stan also got a start on his life long campaign of improving the science of tagging fish to better enable the study of their migratory patterns and harvest levels. Specifically Stan began with improving methods for micro-tagging Alaskan chum salmon fry. Stan's work on salmon tagging and marking lead directly to his work after retiring from Alaska Fish and Game in 1987. During a 27-year career with Northwest Marine Technology, he specialized in marking and tagging systems for fish and shellfish. In addition to his work that helped improve management of migratory fisheries throughout the United States, Stan introduced marking and tagging technology in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Korea, and China. One of Stan's last work assignments was with Great Lakes fishery managers to mark or tag hatchery fish stocked in the lakes, using Northwest Marine Technology's advanced automated technology.

Stan is a fisheries professional who has had many major accomplishments throughout his career and has made decades of solid contributions to science, policy, management, and of course, his guiding priority, habitat conservation.

Mark Van Patten (Missouri)

Mark Van Patten is a retired Fisheries Management Biologist for the Missouri Department of Conservation. He worked as a Stream Team Biologist for the Southeast and St. Louis regions in Missouri. He coordinated the activities of Stream Team volunteers throughout his region empowering them to take an active stance in protecting and preserving the rivers and streams they love. As a private citizen he founded the first Stream Team in Missouri in 1989. In his personal time he is a published author and for 13 years hosted a national weekly PBS Television show on fly tying Called "The Tying Bench."

Mark spent a lot of time on, in and next to his favorite river, the Roubidoux Creek in Pulaski County. As he became disturbed by the amount of dumping and debris in this once pristine resource, Mark decided to do something about it. With his friends, the Roubidoux Fly Fishers, he organized a Roubidoux River Cleanup in 1988, removing 14.7 tons of debris in just a couple days. When he heard that the Conservation Federation of Missouri was beginning a new statewide river cleanup program for volunteers, Mark signed up as Missouri Stream Team Number One.

Since those inspiring beginnings, the Missouri Stream Team program has exploded in numbers and in the diversity of work that is being done for Missouri waters. Twenty-five years since its founding, there are now over 5,000 Missouri Stream Teams all over the state. Volunteers do water quality monitoring, stream health training, riparian restoration and tree planting, litter pickups and river access adoptions, storm drain stenciling, advocacy, education and much more. The program has been a model for citizen water engagement in the country and receives major support from the Missouri Department of Conservation and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

Mark is a published author, an in-demand speaker, a life member of the Federation of Fly Fishers, and a leader in the cause of cleaning up Missouri's rivers and streams. He has received numerous awards and honors, all a testament to his skill and passion for the sport of fishing

Please note, during the winter of 2023 we will be announcing the induction of five (5) other honorees. They are members of our Legacy category. In other words, those who have been “scooped up by the big landing net in the sky.” Please watch for this announcement. It is scheduled to be released during the January/February 2023 time frame.