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The Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame Class of 2026 Has Been Selected

The Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame headquartered in Hayward, Wisconsin has selected seven individuals to be honored with induction into the organization for their significant and lasting contributions to the sport and heritage of fresh water fishing. Every year a panel of industry leaders meets to choose from a vast group of nominees for inclusion into this distinguished cadre of professionals.

Lee Bailey, Jr. – Florida

Lee Bailey, Jr., is a Pro Angler that began his illustrious career in the New England region where bass were secondary to many other species. He is currently a Florida bass fishing guide.

One of the nation's most publicized and prominent tournament anglers Bailey, Jr. competed on the Bassmaster Elite series and FLW professional angler circuit. He founded and completely managed the renowned Foxwoods Bass Challenge Tour, the largest and most professional run bass tournament circuit ever in the history of bass tournament fishing in the Northeast. Bailey, Jr., has authored books on fishing, and is a skilled lure designer, lecturer, tournament organizer, promoter, environmentalist and teacher of fishing skills. Bailey, Jr. has written many articles, published many photos and has been featured in numerous publications including BASSMASTER, B.A.S.S. Times, In-Fisherman and Fishing Tackle Retailer magazines, just to name a few. Bailey, Jr. has recorded nine Top 10 finishes in Bassmaster events and won the 1997 Missouri Invitational on Table Rock Lake. He has competed in three Bassmaster Classics and two FLW Tour Championships

Jerry Costabile – Wisconsin

Jerry Costabile has represented the fishing industry at the highest level possible whether he is operating one of the most successful Lake Michigan charter fishing operations or standing in front of a full capacity crowd at a Great Lakes trout and salmon school.

Costabile, is well-known in the Kenosha/Racine fishing community as a Lake Michigan charter captain with 37 years' experience in the fishing and charter business. He is the captain of the 35-foot Viking charter boat "RESOLUTE" out of the Port of Kenosha, Wisconsin. He is a competitive Pro Series trout and salmon tournament angler on the western shores of Lake Michigan where he and his team are consistent finishers in the top five, with several first-place finishes to their credit. Costabile has been named Kenosha Sport-Fishing's "Angler of the Year" in 2016, 2017 and 2018 and he was also a five-time recipient of the Kenosha Sportfishing's "Big

Fish" award. He is the creator and instructor of the trout and salmon school "Top to Bottom" which is a unique school that gives students classroom instruction as well as on-the-water instruction aboard the "RESOLUTE".

Daniel Isermann – Wisconsin

Dan Isermann's contributions to fisheries management began while he was getting his master's degree at Tennessee Tech where he evaluated crappie population dynamics and management strategies in Tennessee reservoirs under the guidance of Dr. Phil Bettoli, and continued during his PhD at South Dakota State University where he characterized population dynamics and management of yellow perch in eastern South Dakota glacial lakes under the direction of Dr. Dave Willis.

The common theme of Isermann's work is understanding how fish populations respond to stressors such as climate change, invasive species and harvest, and identifying management actions that may be used to mitigate these stressors. Dan collaborates primarily with state agency researchers and managers, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the U.S. Geological Survey, the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC), the Menominee Indian Tribe, along with numerous academic institutions across North America. Within the fisheries management literature, Dan currently has 70 peer reviewed publications for over a third of which he is the first author, and he and his graduate students regularly attend technical meetings and state and international conferences to share their research and provide training. Dan has and continues to assume service roles related to the development of fisheries management including that of editor for the North American Journal of Fisheries Management, reviewer for 14 journals and several book chapters, and recently as president of the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Fisheries Society.

Jason Przekurat – Wisconsin

Jason Przekurat grew up fishing the Wisconsin River at a very young age. Little did he know that those early days, honing his skills, would pay off into achieving a fishing resume that many would only dream about. Since 1995, when Przekurat started his tournament career, he took it upon himself to become a student of the game. He says that every day on the water is a learning experience.

Przekurat's mission has been to use his many years of experience in the outdoor industry to promote the sport of fishing, the ethics of the sportsman, and the enjoyment that comes with sharing his knowledge and insight with anglers to enjoy the sport of fishing. He has competed on the FLW Tour, AIM Pro Walleye Series, Masters Walleye Circuit, and the National Walleye Tour. Przekurat was the Masters Walleye Circuit World Championship Winner in 2000, Angler of the Year on the RCL in 2003, Angler of the Year on the FLW tour in 2007, was the 2007 Ranger Cup 1st place winner, the National Walleye Tour Championship Winner in 2016, the National Walleye Tour Championship Winner in 2020 and has 44 top ten finishes in professional events. He is currently a Host of "The Next Bite" television show and continues to make many personal appearances at fishing events.

Mark Sak – Michigan

Mark Sak is not only a talented angler, writer, television and radio host, he has also served as President of the Michigan Outdoor Writer's Association where he led the way in forming the Michigan Outdoor Hall of Fame. His love for fishing led him to his interest in competitive angling and he joined the In-Fisherman's Professional Walleye Trail and qualified for two of their national championships. He has taught thousands of anglers how to unlock difficult bites via his participation in these tournaments by writing stories on how the anglers that were competing caught fish in many differing weather conditions on many diverse bodies of water. His articles have appeared in numerous major outdoor magazines. Mark has done numerous fishing seminars at sport shows and sportsmen's clubs. He has for many years taught fishing classes for kids who want to learn how to fish. Sak has been active in the outdoor arena for over 30 years, writing fishing stories, hosting a television program and conducting his own outdoor radio program. His written stories, television and radio programs have earned him numerous writing awards.

Bruce Shumway – Wisconsin

Bruce Shumway began work as a Professional Musky Guide in the Hayward/Cable area of Northwest Wisconsin in 1979 and continued guiding until his retirement in 2022. During this time, Bruce and his guests caught countless trophy muskies up to 55 inches long. This led to his reputation as one of the top "Big Fish" guides in the Midwest.

Bruce was an innovator when it came to lure making. His first success came in 1984 when he created the unique spinnerbait called the "Bootail". In 1990 Bruce sold the "Bootail" to the Eddie Bait Company and went on to found the "Shumway Tackle Company" the following year. There he created and manufactured the very successful "Hot Head" jig spinner, "Funky Chicken" and "Marabou Hot Tail". These unique lures quickly became popular throughout the United States, Canada and even Europe where they are used for giant musky, northern pike, stripers and walleye. In 1994 Bruce created the "Shumway Flasher" which combined interlocked double Colorado blades with a marabou/flashabou tinsel tail.

Bruce was a contributing writer for Musky Hunter and Esox Angler, writing not only about his musky techniques but also the "Why's and How's" of successful catch and release. As a conservationist, Bruce has used his articles and seminars to advocate for higher size limits to allow muskies to reach their full growth potential.

Don Wirth – Tennessee

Don Wirth is one of the most-read writers on the fresh water fishing scene. His articles have appeared in virtually every issue of Bassmaster Magazine since 1971 - that's 54 years. His long-running Bassmaster series "A Day on the Lake" has taught anglers how to locate and catch bass during every season of the year and has showcased the expertise of virtually every top bass pro including such iconic anglers as Bill Dance, Roland Marin and Kevin VanDam. Wirth was one of the earliest proponents of "catch and release" and through his hundreds of articles helped make this conservation practice standard procedure among America's bass anglers.

Wirth was inducted into the Legends of the Outdoors Hall of Fame in 2013 and the Bass Fishing Hall of Fame in 2015. Besides his groundbreaking work for Bassmaster magazine, Wirth has written/supplied photography for virtually every major outdoor publication, on countless topics covering a broad spectrum of fresh water fish species, including trout, stripers, musky, crappie and catfish. He is an avid angler and lists his favorite species as smallmouth bass and landlocked stripers. Wirth officially announced his retirement in December 2024.

The Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame and Museum is the international headquarters for education, recognition and promotion of fresh water sportfishing. Our mission is to develop and maintain the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame and its museum for the preservation and display of historical artifacts of fresh water sportfishing. We strive to conduct and maintain a program for the recognition of persons, organizations and institutions that have made significant and lasting contributions to the sport and heritage of fresh water fishing. Furthermore, we conduct and maintain a program for qualifying, compiling and publishing all fresh water sportfishing records. Additionally, we maintain a library that disseminates information and acts as the clearing house for historical and contemporary publications for the fresh water sportfishing industry. The Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame institutes programs to foster, maintain and improve the environment for future generations through promotion and education. Visit our web site: www.freshwater-fishing.org