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Seven Legendary Individuals Inducted into the 2021 Class of Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Famers

Seven individuals make up the group being inducted into the Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame 2021 class. From their roots as legendary anglers to their pursuit in creating a better environment to host the many species anglers love to fish for, these Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Famers have spent their lives actively supporting and building on the sport so many people enjoy.

Douglas J. Austen Ph.D (Pennsylvania)

Douglas J. Austin is the current Executive Director of the American Fisheries Society (AFS). He brings to the society over 30 years of experience including holding various offices at the state and regional levels of the AFS. Prior to AFS, Austen served with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as the first national coordinator for the Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, an expansive effort to support conservation planning and science at a regional scale throughout much of North America. From 2004 to 2010, Austen served as Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. During that time he co-chaired the work group that wrote the first National Fish Habitat Action Plan. He later served as vice-chair of the national Fish Habitat Board.

Most of Austen's career was spent in Illinois working in various roles with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources and as a research biologist with the Illinois natural History Survey. During those years he helped develop the Illinois Fisheries Analysis System and the Multi-state Aquatic Resources Information System, both early, and innovative approaches to computerized collection, storage and analysis of fisheries information. The research team he worked on also completed extensive research on sampling selectivity, particularly with boat electrofishing, gill nets and trap nets.

Austen has been an adjunct faculty member at the University of Illinois, received his Ph.D from Iowa State University where he worked on lake fish assemblages, an M.S. degree from Virginia Tech working on smallmouth bass projects in the New River and a B.S. degree from South Dakota State University.

Denny Geurink (Michigan)

Prior to launching his outdoor communications career, Denny Geurink introduced many children to the sport of fishing and the conservation ethic through fishing clubs he founded both in the public school system where he taught and in his local community. Without these selfless efforts, it is likely that many of the youngsters touched by the programs he started would not have been

exposed to recreational fishing as an enjoyable pastime and a meaningful way to connect with the natural world.

Through his 40-plus years of writing, TV broadcasts, videos and speaking engagements, Geurink has continued to educate many thousands of people on the techniques, values and joys of fishing for a wide variety of species in locations that cover 48 states, six Canadian provinces and several foreign countries.

If those activities were not enough, for over 25 years Geurink has operated a booking and outfitting agency that takes clients fishing across the U.S and Canada. He pioneered fishing expeditions to several rivers in Russia and the former Soviet Union. The list of his clients and angling companions reads like a who's who of outdoor legends, politicians and other notables from baseball stars to astronauts.

At a point in his career where most people are ready to bask in retirement, Geurink continues to guide clients to trophy trout, char and salmon on remote rivers in Russia and Siberia. A true pioneer in this area, Geurink has helped open up world-class fishing locations to Western anglers and in so doing has helped bring attention to the unparalleled angling opportunities these remote rivers offer and the need to preserve their outstanding fisheries for generations to come.

Chris Gilman (Minnesota)

Chris Gilman has been fishing since he was able to walk. In his early days he grew up on a lake in Northern Wisconsin that did not have walleyes so he fished for bass, northern pike, crappies, bluegill, musky or trout. Focusing on walleyes in his competitive fishing endeavors Gilman's tournament performances place him at the pinnacle of walleye fishing professionals. His tournament record for the past three decades shows he has been a dominant force in that arena. To this day he has cashed more checks on the National Walleye Tour circuit than any other angler. He also put together an unbelievable streak when he placed in the top ten seven years in a row in championship events. He stands alone with this accomplishment. In 1997 Gilman set the all-time single season record on the Professional Walleye Trail for Angler of the Year with a win and five top ten finishes. He has won six majors which is an incredible accomplishment.

Like other top anglers at his level Gilman has spent thousands of hours on the road giving seminars from Michigan to Montana. He also worked hundreds of days in sport show booths. His seminars covered every aspect of fishing, from slip bobber fishing to precision trolling, he has covered it all. In 1998 he and a friend started Walleye University where people could come for a day of education. They not only listened to top speakers but received hands-on experience learning how to tie spinners, special fishing knots and learned the secrets of the pros.

Although most people think Gilman is strictly a walleye fisherman, he has won bass tournaments, ice fishing events, loves to stream trout fish and chase big bluegills.

Bob Izumi (Canada)

Bob Izumi is a Canadian fishing icon and ambassador, and a champion of recreational fishing worldwide. He entered his first bass tournament at age 15 when his father Joe Izumi organized the first-ever bass tournament in Canada in southern Ontario in 1973. He's been hooked on tournament bass fishing ever since. Izumi became Canada's first full-time professional angler in 1979. His bass tournament career is unsurpassed among Canadian anglers, with more than 70 major event wins to his credit at last count, including multiple "Angler/Team of the Year" titles. He is also the only Canadian angler to win the "Triple Crown" of fishing, capturing the Canadian Open, the Classic Championship, and Angler of the Year title in a single season. In July 2011, Izumi won his first major championship in the USA when he captured first place in the Everstart Series (FLW) 1000 Islands tournament. He continues to compete in events across North America, and has represented Canada multiple times internationally in fishing competitions.

As an outdoors communicator, Izumi's goal has always been to entertain and to educate. One way he has accomplished this is by conducting countless fishing seminars at outdoors shows over the last 40 years. He's also been the host of the first modern-day TV fishing show in Canada, the syndicated "Bob Izumi's Real Fishing Show" which began in 1983. He also co-hosted (along with Hall of Fame member Gord Pyzer) the syndicated "Real Fishing Radio Show" for many years, and also publishes the quarterly "Bob Izumi's Real Fishing Magazine" Through these various channels, Izumi has taught and inspired thousands of young anglers to take up and excel at the sport of fishing.

In 2000, Izumi created Fishing Forever, a not-for-profit conservation organization to act as a fundraising and funding agency for worthwhile fishing, conservation and education projects. The organization helps fund dozens of events annually and, since its inception, it has assisted over 100,000 youngsters to experience the joy of fishing.

In summary, Bob Izumi is a Canadian fishing legend, and one of the most recognizable anglers in Canadian history.

Lee Kernen (Wisconsin)

Lee Kernen enjoyed a distinguished career as an employee in the fisheries department of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and post-retirement as a columnist and writer, contributing most frequently to Wisconsin Outdoor News. Lee spent 33 years working at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR) working up from a regional fisheries biologist to eventually retiring as the Chief of Fisheries.

Kernen's passion lies with the Great Lakes Fisheries, most famously supervising and directing the establishment of the Pacific salmon program in Wisconsin. Kernen located the sites and supervised the development of imprinting release ponds, assessed returns and worked with the fishing community to publicize fishing opportunities. Further as the Chief of Fisheries for the WI DNR he avoided catastrophic collapse of the Pacific Salmon program in Lake Michigan by

anticipating and planning around a Bacterial Kidney Disease outbreak, assuring world class fishing would continue. Kernan's leadership in development of the Pacific Salmon fishery in Lake Michigan extended well beyond Wisconsin, leading the other Lake Michigan States in development of a sustainable recreational fishery that across the Great Lakes, provides \$7 billion in annual contributions to the nation's economy.

Perhaps Kernan's largest leadership challenge with the WI DNR Fisheries program was supervision of, and implementation of, the Voigt Decision regarding tribal fisheries in Northern Wisconsin. Once the Voigt Decision affirmed treaty rights for off-reservation fishing for Ojibwe tribes in Wisconsin, Kernan led the team that successfully developed a management system that allowed for shared harvest of walleye and muskellunge within Wisconsin's Ceded Territory. Implementation of the walleye management plan in the Ceded Territory was incredibly controversial, leading to multiple protests over tribal harvest. Kernan's steady leadership style, however, assured the State would be able to meet the requirements set out by the federal court decision and assure that recreational angling continued unabated for these species.

Mike Mladenik (Wisconsin)

Mike Mladenik, has been a fishing guide and educator for more than 40 years specializing in smallmouth bass fishing. Mladenik averages 150 guide trips per year educating anglers on catching smallmouth bass by spinning tackle or fly fishing on the Menomonie River and High Falls. On a daily basis he demonstrates teaching methods to anglers of all ages, and he especially enjoys teaching youth about the great outdoors. Mladenik devotes much time filming and then sharing his works with more than 60 YouTube videos available, and the number is growing. Catching fish on several techniques is a great specialty with topwater action, the use of plastics and finesse fishing his favorites. Not only does Mladenik have exceptional skills on the water catching fish, but he has demonstrated his love of fishing his whole life as an individual that cares deeply about conservation and sharing his experiences.

Mladenik has authored nine books currently sold on Amazon. Titles include "Fishing For Smallmouth Bass", "Fishing Soft Plastics For Bass", "A Guide to Catching Fish", "Topwater Bass", "Wisconsin Bass Fishing", "Why Do I Fish", "Its All In A Days Work", "Fishing Michigans Upper Peninsula (Top 140 Lakes)" and "Top Lakes in Northeast Wisconsin." Mladenik performs seminars across the country on fishing techniques. He speaks at eight to 10 seminars a year, which include retailers, Sports Shows, countless fishing clubs and how-to clinics reaching out to more than 4,000 anglers per year. Mladenik is a headline speaker at six outdoor sports shows per year in Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan and Indiana. He has been a contributing outdoor writer for 35 years. Publications include Fishing Facts Magazine, Michigan Sportsman, Musky Hunter Magazine, The Badger Sportsman, Woods and Water Magazine, Smallmouth Magazine and Midwest Outdoors Magazine.

Bruce (Doc) Samson (Minnesota)

Bruce Samson moved to Minnesota after completing his medical education in 1976 and started practicing medicine and fishing. Fishing has always been his main passion and when he began to fish competitively his success gave him the opportunity to retire completely from medicine.

Early on Samson learned the value of sonar, mapping and GPS for fishing success, so he studied and used that knowledge to win walleye tournaments. He discovered others were interested in his knowledge and understanding of marine electronics, so he started sharing his sonar and fishing knowledge which is why he was voted the Top Teaching Pro on the Professional Walleye Trail (PWT) in 2004. He continues holding seminars and educates angler on the benefits of learning the boat's electronics at the web site: www.doctorsonar.com.

Samson has many major walleye tournament wins. One of his first wins was in 1987 on the Masters Walleye Circuit. He took first place in 1999, 2001, 2002 and 2006 on the PWT circuit. He placed at the top spot in 2012, 2015 and 2016 on the AIM Pro Walleye Series and in 2002 he earned a \$300,000 payday by winning the Wal-Mart RCL Walleye Championship on the Mississippi River in Red Wing, MN.

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. We conduct and maintain a program for qualifying, compiling and publishing all fresh water sportfishing records. The Hall of Fame maintains 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 our environment for future generations through promotion and education. Visit our web site: www.freshwater-fishing.org