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Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame to Induct Five Legends in 2025

(Hayward, Wisconsin) The International Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame will be inducting five individuals into their 2025 class. This recognition is bestowed upon those who 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.

Daryl Christensen - Wisconsin

Daryl Christensen has been catching fish for the better part of 70 years. For more than 50 of those years, he has been a fishing guide, fishing educator, book author, writer of more than 1,500 articles and one of the nation's top competitive walleye fishermen with several tournament wins and more than 40 top ten finishes, including victories on the In-Fisherman Professional Walleye Trail. A multi-species angler, Christensen also has several wins and top five finishes in bass and musky tournaments over his long career.

Known as the "Jigmeister" for his expertise in jigging for walleyes Christensen has given hundreds of seminars at major sport shows and fishing clubs in 20 states and 3 Canadian provinces, as well as clinics on bass, pike, musky, catfish and panfish. He has also been a guest on dozens of television shows, produced videos and has authored books on catching walleyes and saugers in the rivers and lakes of North America.

Although retired from full-time competitive fishing, Christensen still guides part-time and continues to share a lifetime of fishing experiences, expertise and stories about his years as a full-time angler in the fishing industry, at various outdoor shows, banquets, television shows, podcasts and events around the country.

Allen Cole - Oregon

Allen Cole is known as an innovator and pioneer in lure design. Cole is the creator of a family of lures called the AC Plug. He has been referred to as the "Originator" and "Godfather of Swim Baits" for trophy-sized fish in the west for many years. Cole was the first person in the western United States to paint lures to look like hatchery trout, which turned out to be the preferred food source for trophy fish in California. Even now, in his 80's, he continues to fish and work on new and innovative lure designs.

Over his long fishing career Cole has used his lures to land substantial numbers of trophy fish. He can boast landing 65 largemouth bass over 10 pounds. His largest was 17 pounds. Also, two 10 pounders caught on the same lure at the same time. Cole's lures, with him in control, landed 31 striped bass over 40 pounds with eight of those over 50 pounds and his largest striped bass was 63 pounds, setting the Nevada state record. Cole has used his AC Plugs to land 52 brown trout over 10 pounds. His largest was 26 pounds.

Cole's love of fresh water fishing has spanned a lifetime. He is a highly accomplished fisherman and a uniquely innovative lure craftsman and has improved the success of anglers throughout the country with his abilities.

Dr. Steven J. Cooke - Ottawa, Canada

Steven J. Cooke is a professor of applied fish ecology at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. He is heralded as a key thinker in aquatic conservation. His research leadership has enabled the development and refinement of policies, practices, and guidelines that have significantly benefited recreational fisheries, anglers, and fresh water ecosystems in North America and around the globe.

Cooke is one of the most published and creative recreational fisheries scientists in history. He has over 1000 peer reviewed papers of which over 200 are specific to recreational fisheries. He has also served as guest editor for six special issues of journals dedicated to recreational fisheries science. Cooke's work spans the globe working from headwater streams to large lakes and rivers. The outcomes from his work have therefore informed the development of catch-and-release guidance for tens of fish species (ranging from sockeye salmon to muskellunge), identified opportunities for modernizing fisheries management to benefit fish and anglers, and enhanced governance systems for recreational fisheries at the local, national and even international scale. He has also led initiatives to raise the profile of inland fisheries and more broadly the conservation of freshwater biodiversity. His expertise has received important international recognition. He has been appointed Fellow of the American Fisheries Society and International Fellow of the Explorers Club. In 2022, he received both the LeCren Medal from the Fisheries Society of the British Isles and the Ricker Award from the American Fisheries Society in recognition of his contributions to fisheries conservation and management. In 2023 he received the Barry Fitzpatrick Conservation Award from the International Game Fish Association.

Mike Norris - Illinois

For over 46 years, Mike Norris has been a dedicated outdoors communicator, sharing his knowledge and passion for fishing with people of all ages and genders. His commitment to conservation is truly inspiring, as he played a pivotal role in the establishment of catch and release only zones along portions of the Fox River. As the President of Region Four of the United Sportfishing Association of Illinois, he successfully advocated for the interest earned on Illinois fishing licenses to be returned to the general fishing fund, a significant change from its previous allocation into a general revenue account.

From 1994 to 2006, Norris shared his knowledge through 574 weekly outdoor columns for the Aurora Beacon and the Elgin Courier (Illinois) newspapers. His writing prowess extended to a monthly column for Midwest Outdoors Magazine and numerous video segments on Midwest Outdoors television. His work has also been featured in esteemed publications such as Badger Sportsman Magazine, Fishing Facts Magazine, Heartland Illinois Magazine, Michigan Fisherman Magazine, and Musky Hunter Magazine. To this day, Norris still provides weekly fishing reports for the Chicago Sun-Times. Norris has hosted 624 weekly radio shows featuring guest interviews with the top names in the fishing industry

From 1986 through 2005, he participated in the Masters Walleye Circuit (MWC) and Professional Walleye Tour (PWT) tournament circuits, achieving four Top Ten finishes. He also excelled in the Illinois Walleye Trail with two Top Six finishes. Before his pro walleye experience, Mike's angling talent was recognized with five bass tournament wins across various lakes in southern Wisconsin, a testament to his skill and dedication.

In 1995, Mike founded the Walleye Masters Institute, the first-ever instruction school for teaching walleye enthusiasts how to improve their walleye angling skills. Classes were held in Chicago, IL and Sioux Falls, SD. He partnered with Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Famer Ted Takasaki to help run the schools. Today, Mike continues to be a much sought-after seminar speaker who frequently appears at fishing clubs and sports shows throughout the Midwest.

Mike operates a multi-species guide service on lakes in south-central Wisconsin. His guiding business is just an extension of his educational platform, as he teaches his clients the subtleties of successful fishing on each guided trip.

Ronald J. Spitler - Michigan

Ronald J. Spitler was a fish biologist for Michigan throughout his career. His efforts to improve fishing not only benefited Michigan but also had an international impact, including Michigan's neighbor to the east, Canada, and all states bordering the Great Lakes including New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

Spitler joined the Fisheries Division for Michigan in 1966 while finishing his master's degree in Fish Management at the University of Michigan. He spent three years in the Jackson and Plainwell District before being promoted to Southeast Michigan District Fisheries Biologist where he served for twenty-eight years before being promoted to the First Urban Fisheries Biologist for Southeast Michigan which encompassed Michigan's 4 million residents, 220 lakes and streams, and half of Michigan's anglers, and many sport and fishing organizations.

Spitler, on many occasions, wrote reports as well as fishing updates for BassMaster Magazine, whose distribution was over half a million subscribers across the United States and Europe. Due to his extensive background as a fish biologist, he would collaborate with Bruce Shupp, the Bass Anglers Sportsman's Society National Conservation Director, on articles for Bass Master Magazine regarding the nationwide LMBv, (Large Mouth Bass Virus), and its effects on bass,

and how it would affect fishing in the future. Other articles for BassMaster Magazine would include information supplied by Spitler, including the "Spread of Zebra Mussels Across the Great Lakes" article and its effects on Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake St Clair, Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, covering both the positive and negative effects of zebra mussels.

For more than seventeen years, Ron was a weekly contributor to the JP McCarthy Radio Show, which had a listening audience of over three million listeners in the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Michigan. His weekly Friday report included information on salmon, walleye, and bass, as well as techniques for success, including where, how, and what to use.

The Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame and Museum is the international headquarters for education, recognition and promotion of fresh water sportfishing. Their 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. They 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. The Hall of Fame conducts and maintains a program for qualifying, compiling and publishing all fresh water sportfishing records. The Hall of Fame also 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 the environment for future generations through promotion and education. Visit their web site: www.freshwater-fishing.org