

**Bill Threinen Outstanding Service Award  
Presented to Kurt Welke  
February 2, 2010  
Green Bay, Wisconsin**

The Threinen award is given to an individual who has shown longtime commitment and outstanding dedication to the Wisconsin Chapter. From about the time he received his Bachelor of Science in Fisheries from UWSP in December 1978, our 2010 recipient has tackled everything he touches with an amazing amount of dedication and enthusiasm.

Even though he holds a Bachelor's Degree in Fisheries, our Honoree, Kurt Welke, can (and will) do "just about anything". After graduation, Kurt postponed his Fisheries calling to work for Groshek Disposal (1979-1980) in Stevens Point Wisconsin. He often heard the phrase on the truck's CB "Da Kurt - Hey how's da pickin'?"

In 1980 Kurt left a promising career in Solid Waste (actually he just left the garbage truck in the Red Owl parking lot for old man Groshek to pick up). He opted for a tour with the USFWS in Vernal, Utah and Grand Junction Colorado (1980-82). He worked seasonally for the USFWS - Colorado River Fisheries Project primarily working with the endangered Colorado pikeminnow, humpback chub and bonytail chub where he established his skills for implanting transmitters and tracking riverine fishes.

Finding river work a blast, he landed work with the State of Oregon (Umatilla) Fish and Game on Columbia River (1982-84). Love for the western rivers was soon blinded as this charismatic Sicilian (complete with Italian sport shirt) entered into long-term commitment when he married his bride of 25 years, Suzanne Ripple, in 1984.

He took his blushing bride back to Wisconsin and worked miscellaneous WDNR LTE positions in Green Bay and Madison (1985-1986). Perhaps it was Green Bay where he developed his capacity (and the intestinal fortitude) to devour boxes of greasy smoked chubs.

In 1986, he found a permanent job as a DNR Fisheries Research Technician under Don Fago, another recipient of the Threinen Award. Some of Don's legendary enthusiasm undoubtedly rubbed off as he pursued the Statewide Fish Distribution Study. The work offered his debut on another big river when he was tasked to implant transmitters to track catfish and paddlefish on the Lower Wisconsin River.

In 1988, Kurt Welke took a position in Prairie Du Chien as Fish Manager of the Mississippi River work unit. He quickly found controversy. Clamming was the hot-button issue, and Kurt became an expert in freshwater clam ecology, as well as the economic and political realities of commercial clamming. He quickly found the value of commiserating with other professionals while he was navigating those thorny issues. Kurt has remained active in the Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society since its inception in 1998. He was also active in the Upper Mississippi River Conservation Committee and the Mississippi Interstate Cooperative Resource Association.

While at Prairie Du Chien, Kurt was instrumental in developing artificial propagation techniques for the Federally Endangered Higgins eye pearly mussel. He received Wisconsin Chapter's 1997 Steve Serns Best Professional Paper award in Oshkosh WI for his presentation "*An evaluation of relocation of unionid mussels into an artificial pond.*" (Kurt's co-authors were Teresa Naimo and Pamela Thiel).

In 2000, Kurt transferred to his current location in Fitchburg to be DNR's Senior Fisheries Biologist for Dane and Green Counties. In the Madison area, Kurt realized that managing fisheries often means managing land. He tackled issues like urban runoff, and stormwater management in new developments. He also dove headfirst into manure management and farm runoff. Most recently, Kurt has been developing innovative ways to manage carp, even sending undercover agents with homing devices to lead him to secret carp wintering grounds.

While busily pursuing his day job, Kurt has also been Chair of Wisconsin Chapter committees for a decade. He was Local Arrangements chair for the 1999 joint meeting between Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin Chapters, and he went on to Chair the Time and Place Committee from 2001-2003. Kurt hosted the WI-AFS 2003 annual meeting in Madison. He then chaired the Nominations Committee from 2004 to present.

During 2003-2005, Kurt served on the Chapter Governing Board as President-elect, President and Past-President. At the same time, he Chaired the Socials Committee for the 2004 Parent Society AFS meeting in Madison.

In 2007, the 68<sup>th</sup> Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference was held near Kurt's office in Madison. Kurt quickly became the behind-the-scenes guy for local logistics. His hard work and dedication made a lot of things happen, but he'll always be remembered in connection with the Minnow Races.

Kurt has been a guest lecturer at the UW Stevens Point Fisheries Management class and in 2009 he was recognized as a "Water Champion" by Dane County Lakes and Watershed Committee and Dane County Board. Kurt's passion for fisheries is exemplary. He has a rare ability to bring out the best in those around him, and his enthusiasm knows no bounds. Fish Management is not so much what Kurt does as who he is.