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GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION HONORS JOHN ROBERTSON OF MICHIGAN FOR PROMOTING SOUND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT THROUGH STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Robertson, of Grand Haven, Michigan, is recognized for his work to engage fishery managers in forward-thinking, goal-oriented practices to improve the Great Lakes fishery

ANN ARBOR, MI—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission presented Mr. John Robertson, the former chief of fisheries for the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, with the 2013 C.D. “Buzz” Besadny Award for Fostering Great Lakes Partnerships. Mr. Robertson was recognized for facilitating essential, ongoing cooperation among all fishery managers in the development of shared fishery management goals. Such cooperation is particularly important in the Great Lakes basin as eight states, the province of Ontario, and U.S. tribes work with federal agencies and the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to manage the shared fishery. Without cross-border cooperation, chaos would ensue. Professionals like John Robertson, who appreciate the need for cooperation, make Great Lakes fishery management possible. Those who receive commission awards are first nominated by outside individuals.

The C. D. “Buzz” Besadny Award for Fostering Great Lakes Partnerships is named after the former Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Secretary and Great Lakes Fishery Commission Chair who epitomized the role of partnerships in fisheries management.

Commissioner William Taylor, University Distinguished Professor in Global Fisheries Systems at Michigan State University, presented the award to Mr. Robertson during the commission’s recent annual meeting in Montreal, Quebec. Said Taylor: “Over the course of Mr. Robertson’s notable career in state government, he was a visionary, a mentor, and a partner to all who were willing to work with him. Leading the Fisheries Division of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources through the 1990s, he not only made sure his state fishery managers interacted regularly with managers from other jurisdictions, he also developed close working relationships with his fellow fish chiefs throughout the basin.”

Taylor continued: “Those who nominated Mr. Robertson for this award describe him as ‘an exemplary mentor who works tirelessly to cultivate new generations of fishery managers who are progressive not only in thought but in action.’ He continues to share his valuable vision and insight with all who will listen. Mr. Robertson’s commitment to mentorship was perhaps best realized with the establishment of the Natural Resource Leadership Program, now the Great Lakes Leadership Academy. He was integral in establishing this leadership development initiative, designed to equip new and seasoned professionals with the tools necessary for successful leadership. Knowing Mr. Robertson, I can say without a doubt that this transfer of skills and knowledge to the next generation is the piece that matters above all else.”

It is particularly fitting for Mr. Robertson to receive the Besadny award this year, as 2013 marks the 20th anniversary of the Partnership for Ecosystem Research and Management (PERM) program which he initiated. The objective of the PERM program remains to narrow the gap between research and

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management. Formalized on Earth Day, April 23rd, in 1993, the program started with just two partners – Michigan State University and the Michigan DNR. As the benefits of the enterprise became quickly realized, the partnership expanded to include the DNR Forest Management Division in 1995, the Great Lakes Fishery Commission and the U.S. Geological Survey’s Great Lakes Science Center in 1997, and the University of Guelph in 2001. Today, PERM supports a number of exemplary scientists who compete world-wide for grants and bring new knowledge that facilitates better management of our Great Lakes fisheries resources. PERM has been essential to Great Lakes fishery management and the sea lamprey control program by supporting cutting edge research.

Taylor continued: “For a man as dedicated to the Great Lakes as Mr. Robertson, it is not surprising that retirement did not slow him down. He continues his service with the Scientific Advisory Team of the Great Lakes Fishery Trust, representing Michigan United Conservation Clubs, and maintains an active role with the Great Lakes Leadership Academy.”

“John Robertson paved the way for cooperative fishery management in the Great Lakes basin. Those of us in the field today, and those who will join the effort in the future, owe him our gratitude,” Taylor concluded.

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission is an international organization established by the United States and Canada through the 1954 Convention on Great Lakes Fisheries. The commission has the responsibility to support fisheries research, control the invasive sea lamprey in the Great Lakes, and facilitate implementation of A Joint Strategic Plan for Management of Great Lakes Fisheries, a provincial, state, and tribal fisheries management agreement.



Great Lakes Fishery Commission Commissioners Dr. William Taylor (right-center) and Mr. William James (right) present John Robertson (left-center), joined by his wife, Sue (left), with the C.D. Buzz Besadny Award for Fostering Great Lakes Partnerships. The Great Lakes Fishery Commission presented the award to Mr. Robertson on May 28, 2013, during its annual meeting, held in Montreal, Quebec. Photo: J.Wingfield