



Great Lakes Fishery Commission

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GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION HONORS DR. KAREN MURCHIE WITH BESADNY AWARD FOR FOSTERING GREAT LAKES PARTNERSHIPS

Murchie recognized for elevating sucker research, directing volunteer-led monitoring across three Great Lakes states, and engaging myriad audiences in the Great Lakes conservation community

WINDSOR, ONTARIO—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission honored Dr. Karen Murchie of the Shedd Aquarium with the 2026 C.D. “Buzz” Besadny Award for Fostering Great Lakes Partnerships, during the Commission’s annual meeting in Windsor, Ontario, on June 3, 2026. The award is named after C.D. “Buzz” Besadny—a former Commissioner and secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources—who believed the path to successful fisheries management was through partnerships. Commissioner Shannon Estenoz presented the award in recognition of Murchie’s work to elevate sucker research and engagement with a myriad of audiences.

“Karen is well-known and respected in the science community, and her determination to advance sucker fish research has expanded our knowledge of the Great Lakes ecosystem,” said Commissioner Estenoz. “She is a staunch advocate who takes her message from fish markets to meeting rooms—and everywhere she goes, she brings new people into the conversation.”

Sucker fish are not generally prioritized by anglers and have rarely been the subject of major scientific study. Murchie changed that trajectory and brought suckers to the forefront of her research. Through a Commission-funded collaborative telemetry study with key partners, she built the scientific infrastructure to track sucker fish movement and migration across the basin, generating data that strengthens our understanding of the Great Lakes ecosystem. Her work has drawn fisheries managers who previously overlooked the species into a growing research community.

Murchie presents at various meetings and conferences, contributes regularly to scientific literature, and gives lectures, community talks, and presentations with a clear goal of making science accessible and earning public support for conservation. While fisheries managers have traditionally focused on anglers and commercial fishers, Murchie engages with youth, outdoor enthusiasts, and others who rarely see themselves as part of the fisheries conservation conversation.

“Karen understands that science needs public support and the best way to earn that support is to



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educate and include the public in the process,” Commissioner Estenoz continued. “She saw a hole in who was being engaged with, and she decided to fill it—recognizing that stewarding the Great Lakes requires getting everyone involved and invested.”

Commissioner Estenoz concluded: “Karen has been an influential leader in this arena, putting her boots to the ground to progress sucker research and invite non-traditional audiences to join the conservation community. We are lucky to have Karen leading the charge, and we recognize that the Great Lakes will continue to thrive with the work she is doing.”

Dr. Karen Murchie is currently the Director of Freshwater Research at Shedd Aquarium, addressing wildlife conservation concerns in the Great Lakes region and leading a research program focused on migratory fishes.



Great Lakes Fishery Commission Commissioner Shannon Estenoz (right) presents Dr. Karen Murchie with the 2026 C.D. “Buzz” Besadny Award for Fostering Great Lakes Partnerships. The award was presented to Murchie on June 3, 2026, during the Great Lakes Fishery Commission’s annual meeting held in Windsor, Ontario. Photo: R. Shaw, GLFC.

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. Visit online at www.glfc.org.

