



## Great Lakes Fishery Commission

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### **GREAT LAKES FISHERY COMMISSION HONORS SHAWN NOWICKI WITH THE VERN APPLIGATE AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO SEA LAMPREY CONTROL**

*Nowicki recognized for her leadership and long-standing commitment to working with Indigenous partners, directly contributing to the success of sea lamprey control and restoration of lake trout in Lake Superior*

**WINDSOR, ONTARIO**—The Great Lakes Fishery Commission (Commission) presented Ms. Shawn Nowicki, of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), with the 2026 Vernon C. Applegate Award for Outstanding Contributions to Sea Lamprey Control, during the Commission’s annual meeting in Windsor, Ontario, on June 3, 2026. The award is named after the father of sea lamprey control, Dr. Vernon Applegate, who made it possible to protect the \$5.1 billion Great Lakes fishery. Commissioner Karen Diver, Senior Advisor to the President for Native American Affairs at the University of Minnesota, presented the award in recognition of Nowicki’s exceptional leadership throughout a 30-plus-year career with the USFWS.

The award recognized Nowicki for her dedication to building and nurturing relationships with Indigenous partners and her commitment to meaningfully engaging Tribal nations about sea lamprey control operations on Indigenous lands and territories. That dedication contributed to the success of sea lamprey control and the restoration of lake trout in Lake Superior.

“These relationships took time, intention, and transparency,” said Commissioner Diver. “Starting as a technician to then become a supervisory biologist, Shawn knows the hard work and dedication that a successful program requires. What’s more, she committed herself to better understanding our Indigenous partners and became the perfect ambassador for the program—teaching us all by her example. The control program would not be where it is today if not for her leadership.”

Nowicki has spent multiple decades with the Sea Lamprey Control Program, working her way from long nights in the field operating lampricide feeders to her current role overseeing larval assessment and control crews that travel across the basin each year to provide critical data on the approximately 500 streams infested by sea lampreys.

Some of her noteworthy work has unfolded along the shores of Lake Superior. The Bad River—a tributary running through the territory of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa—is one of the largest producers of sea lampreys in Lake Superior. Gaining access to that watershed for control operations required more than permits and planning. It required trust, and Nowicki built it over years of sustained, transparent engagement with tribal staff and community members. Through her work, control crews have been able to treat the Bad River and effectively control sea lamprey populations so that lake trout



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restoration can be successful.

Commissioner Diver continued, “Sea lampreys love to feed on lake trout, which are not only food, but represent sacred relatives and cultural connections to the waters of the Great Lakes. Without Shawn’s dedication to collaborating with Indigenous partners, sea lampreys would have continued to impact rehabilitation efforts. Her work has directly contributed to the restoration of lake trout in Lake Superior.”

“What Shawn has done is not an easy task. She has gone above and beyond to ensure Indigenous voices are heard while also advocating for critical sea lamprey control. Her efforts will give lake trout and other species a chance to thrive in Lake Superior. The Great Lakes basin benefits from her hard work, and we are very thankful for her commitment,” Commissioner Diver concluded.



Great Lakes Fishery Commission Commissioner Karen Diver (right) presents Shawn Nowicki with the 2026 Vernon C. Applegate Award for Outstanding Contributions to Sea Lamprey Control. The award was presented to Nowicki on June 3, 2026, during the Great Lakes Fishery Commission’s annual meeting held in Windsor, Ontario. Photo: R. Shaw, GLFC.

