



Missouri Chapter of the American Fisheries Society

2025 John L. Funk Award of Excellence

The John L. Funk Award of Excellence is one of the highest honors presented by the Missouri Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. Originally named the Award of Excellence, it was later renamed to honor Slim Funk, the founder of the Missouri Chapter, in recognition of his professionalism and unwavering commitment to Missouri's aquatic resources. This award is presented to individuals who have demonstrated exceptional professionalism and made long-term contributions to the conservation, management, and understanding of Missouri's aquatic ecosystems.

This year's recipient, **Dave Woods**, exemplifies everything this award represents. Over the course of his more than two-decade career, Dave has been a leader in fisheries science, habitat conservation, public engagement, and education. From his time as a Fisheries Management Biologist with the Missouri Department of Conservation to his current role as Senior Project Scientist at the Ozark Underground Laboratory, Dave has left an undeniable impact on Missouri's aquatic resources. His work in species conservation, habitat restoration, electrofishing safety, and environmental education has helped shape the way we manage and protect our waterways.

As a Fisheries Management Biologist with the Missouri Department of Conservation from 2008 to 2020, Dave Woods played a pivotal role in managing game and non-game fish populations across Missouri's rivers, streams, and reservoirs. He led multi-disciplinary planning teams, advanced conservation efforts in priority watersheds, and coordinated numerous habitat improvement projects on both public and private lands. His ability to foster strategic collaborations with federal agencies, NGOs, and local stakeholders has been instrumental in enhancing aquatic resource management across the state.

Dave Woods' leadership extended to electrofishing safety, where he served as Chair of the MDC Electrofishing Safety Committee. He not only developed a comprehensive in-house training program but also co-authored a nationally recognized electrofishing manual, now adopted by state agencies across the country. His contributions have set a gold standard for safety and efficiency in fisheries research and management.

A hallmark of Dave Woods' career is his innovative approach to aquatic and karst ecosystem conservation. As Senior Project Scientist at the Ozark Underground Laboratory and Executive Director of the Tumbling Creek Cave Foundation, he has applied advanced

hydrological techniques, including fluorescent tracer dyes, to delineate recharge areas in karst landscapes. His work in managing contaminants and preserving endangered species, such as the Tumbling Creek Cavesnail, showcases his expertise in ecological restoration and biodiversity conservation.

Beyond his direct conservation work, Dave Woods has made significant contributions to environmental education. As an adjunct faculty member at multiple institutions, including Missouri State University and Drury University, he has taught courses on fisheries management, wildlife management, and conservation theory, inspiring the next generation of conservationists. His dedication to public engagement is evident in his coordination of educational field trips and angler education programs, fostering a deeper appreciation for Missouri's natural resources.

Dave Woods' impact extends beyond Missouri. As Esocid Technical Committee Chair for the American Fisheries Society's North Central Division, he has provided technical guidance on stream dynamics and aquatic habitat restoration to state and federal agencies. His scientific publications on fish behavior and toxicology further demonstrate his commitment to advancing the field of aquatic conservation.

Beyond his impressive career achievements, Dave's leadership in mentoring, research, and conservation has strengthened the future of aquatic resource management—not only in Missouri but across the region. His ability to innovate, collaborate, and inspire has left a legacy that will continue to influence fisheries professionals and conservation efforts for years to come.

For his professionalism, leadership, and enduring impact on Missouri's aquatic resources, we are honored to present **the 2025 John L. Funk Award of Excellence to Dave Woods.**
Please join me in congratulating him!

