

Introduction

Good evening, esteemed guests. It gives us immense pleasure to welcome you to the Silvio O. Conte Memorial Sportsman of the Year Dinner. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each one of you for gracing this occasion with your presence and for joining us in honoring the exceptional efforts of these remarkable individuals. This event has been a cherished tradition of the League since 1984, and it is our privilege to continue it in memory of the late Congressman, Silvio O. Conte, who was a legendary conservationist. Each year, we take this opportunity to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments and contributions of a select few sportsmen and conservationists through a series of award presentations. Tonight, we are thrilled to introduce you to the deserving award recipients who have made remarkable contributions to their respective fields. Once again, thank you for joining us, and we hope you have a wonderful evening.

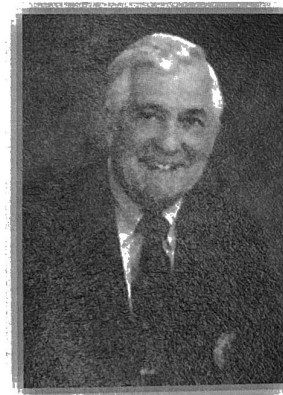
Who are The Berkshire County League of Sportsmen?

The Berkshire County League of Sportsmen (BCLS) is an umbrella organization founded after World War II, representing 12 regional clubs and over 3200 sportsmen and conservationists in the Berkshire region of Massachusetts. Their mission is to preserve the outdoor heritage and protect the natural resources of the area. The delegates of the league are dedicated sportsmen and sportswomen who are willing to give their time, effort, and resources to ensure that future generations can enjoy the pursuits that they love. The BCLS is known for being one of the strongest, most effective, and united organizations in the state.

Daniel Miraglia Berkshire County Sportsman of the Year Award

The Berkshire County League of Sportsmen is proud to present its highest honor, the Silvio O. Conte Sportsman of the Year Award, to Daniel Miraglia of Pittsfield. This prestigious award recognizes Dan's lifelong commitment to the Commonwealth's natural resources and his tireless advocacy for the wildlife inhabiting our lakes, ponds, and streams.

For over 35 years, Dan has served as a dedicated steward of local waters, championing science-based management and attending countless meetings with park commissions and conservation boards to protect ecosystems like the Stockbridge Bowl, Laurel Lake, Onota, Richmond Pond, and Pontoosuc Lake. His persistence was instrumental in modernizing outdated permit processes for lake drawdowns, bringing much-needed public attention to the adverse impacts these practices can have on fisheries and delicate aquatic habitats. Throughout his storied career, Dan has worn many hats, including serving 18 years on the board for Pontoosuc Lake and 25 years as the President of Berkshire County Bass, where he also served as the appointed conservation and environmental officer. His volunteer spirit extends to the Housatonic River Stream Team and various conservation commissions, reflecting a deep-seated belief in hands-on community service. Currently, as a member of Greylock Bass, he continues to work to ensure that the shorelines of Pontoosuc Lake remain open to the public for fishing and recreation, while simultaneously fighting for the protection of urban forests and the natural springs within Springside Park. Beyond policy work, Dan's heart has always been in mentorship. For more than three decades, he has been a fixture at the annual BCLS youth program at Reynolds Pond, where he shares his love for the outdoors and teaches fishing techniques to the next generation. To Dan, the first Saturday in June is more than just a date on the calendar; it is a rewarding opportunity to reshape a child's life through a connection with nature. This award celebrates his decades of leadership, his reliance on sound science, and his unwavering passion for the betterment of the Berkshire environment.



“What the problem of preservation boils down to is this --- ducks can't vote. Trees can't vote. Neither can salmon, flowers, mountains, or rivers. It's incumbent upon us as sportsmen to take on this weighty responsibility to serve this as our greatest constituency.”

Congressman Silvio O. Conte from a speech delivered at the first BCLS banquet in 1984.

AGENDA

4:30 pm Doors Open

4:30 pm Cocktails/Reception/Silent Auction Opens

6:00 pm Dinner

7:00 pm Door Prizes

7:15 pm Silent Auction Closes

7:30 pm Award Presentations

8:00 pm Raffle Drawings

James Carpenter

John Zuber Award

It is with great pride that the Adams Outdoorsmen for Youth (AOFY) announces James "Jim" Carpenter as the recipient of this year's John Zuber Award. In 1976, Jim, alongside the late Paul Comeau and a dedicated circle of friends, laid the foundation for what would become a cornerstone of our community. For five decades, the AOFY has been tirelessly devoted to enriching the lives of local children, fostering a love for the outdoors through "hook and bullet" sports and a wide array of youth activities. As a co-founder and the organization's sole remaining original member, Jim's leadership has been instrumental since the beginning. He served as the AOFY's very first President during its formal incorporation, setting a standard of service that continues to guide us today. Jim's commitment to sportsmanship extends far beyond a single organization. He is a longtime, active pillar of both the Cheshire Rod and Gun Club and the Adams American Legion. His influence also reached regional heights on Lake Ontario, where he operated a successful fishing charter service for years and remains a respected member of the Lake Ontario Salmon Association. We invite you to join us in honoring Jim Carpenter—a man whose lifelong passion for the outdoors and dedication to the next generation have left an' indelible mark on our community.

Bill Gates

Sportsmen's Appreciation Award

It is a distinct honor to announce that William "Bill" Gates of Lee, Massachusetts, has been selected as the distinguished recipient of the Sportsmen's Appreciation Award. Since the mid-1980s, Bill has been a cornerstone of the Berkshire County League of Sportsmen, dedicating decades to the elevation of bass fishing as a premier sport. Through his tireless work with the Massachusetts and New York Bass Federations, National B.A.S.S., and Greylock Bass, he has served as a vital bridge between the angling community and state conservation departments. His efforts have provided essential moral and political support for wildlife initiatives, ensuring that conservation codes are strictly followed and that water quality remains a top priority. Bill has never been one to sit on the sidelines; he has consistently used his platform to hold polluters accountable and bring public attention to environmental abuses, all while fostering a fellowship of friendly exchange where expert techniques are shared to inspire the next generation of youth anglers. Bill's resume is a testament to his leadership and competitive excellence, spanning nearly forty years of high-level involvement. He has served as President of the Berkshire County Bass Association and as a dedicated representative for the Massachusetts and New York State Bass Federations from 1989 through 2024. As the founder of a National B.A.S.S. club in the 1990s and the Director of Greylock Bass since 2012, his influence is woven into the very fabric of regional fishing culture. On the water, his skill is legendary; he is a ten-time Angler of the Year, a New York State Team member, and a veteran competitor on the national stage, including appearances at the Forest Wood National Championship and multiple Northeast Regional and ABA National Championships. Beyond the trophies and titles, Bill remains a fierce advocate for the health of Western Massachusetts' local ecosystems. He has been a leading voice in the oversight of invasive species within our lakes and ponds, frequently representing the interests of both sportsmen and residents in the fight for better lake management. Bill has been particularly vocal regarding the long-term health of our fisheries, arguing passionately against the overuse of chemical applications that threaten the delicate balance of our water bodies. His life's work embodies the principles of preserving the great outdoors, ensuring that the beauty and bounty of the Berkshires remain intact for years to come.

**Nathan Buckhout
Sportsmen's Appreciation Award**

The Berkshire County League of Sportsmen is proud to honor Nathan Buckhout with the Sportsmen's Appreciation Award for his decade of exceptional service as the Western District Wildlife Biologist for MassWildlife. Based out of the Dalton headquarters, Nate has spent the last ten years as a tireless advocate for the hunters and anglers of Western Massachusetts. His work has been instrumental in bridging the gap between scientific resource management and the traditions of the sporting community, ensuring that our local wildlife thrives while remaining accessible to those who cherish the outdoors. A primary architect of the expanded black bear research program in the Berkshires, Nate has dramatically increased the reach of the state's radio telemetry initiatives. This critical data collection provides MassWildlife with a sophisticated understanding of bear population dynamics, habitat use, and human-wildlife conflict mitigation. Beyond his research, Nate is deeply embedded in the operational success of our district, overseeing pheasant distribution, facilitating the paraplegic deer hunt, and coordinating the temporary public archery range at the George Darey Wildlife Management Area in Lenox. Nate's commitment to public safety and conservation extends into emergency response as a member of the Large Animal Response Team and a veteran wildland firefighter. His expertise has seen him deployed to manage wildfires as far as Alaska and Idaho, representing the Commonwealth on a national stage. Furthermore, his dedication to the future of the sport is evident through his leadership in R3 initiatives—Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation—where he frequently presents to the community to welcome new hunters and anglers into the fold. An avid hunter himself, Nate resides in Cummington with his family, continuing his life's work as a dedicated steward of the Massachusetts wilderness.

**Phillip Hiser Jr.
Lifetime Achievement Award**

The Berkshire County League of Sportsmen is proud to honor Phillip Hiser Jr. of Lee with the prestigious 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award. This marks the second time the League has recognized Phil's extraordinary contributions, following his 1992 Sportsman of the Year Award which celebrated his monumental leadership in resurrecting the Lee Sportsmen's Association. After a devastating fire leveled the club's building in 1990, Phil was instrumental in spearheading the rebuilding effort, transforming the facilities and guiding the organization to become one of the largest and most influential sportsmen's groups in Western Massachusetts. In the decades since, Phil has remained a pillar of the sporting community through his tireless work with Ducks Unlimited. Serving in various leadership capacities for the Berkshire County Chapter, he has been a driving force behind the region's annual banquets and membership drives, ensuring that local wetland conservation remains well-funded and at the forefront of the public's mind. His commitment to the "Rescue Our Wetlands" campaign and his advocacy for habitat restoration have protected critical stopovers for migratory waterfowl throughout New England. Phil further extends his dedication to wildlife as the League's representative to Whitetails Unlimited, ensuring a cohesive effort across different conservation disciplines. Beyond his field work, Phil has been a steadfast champion for the next generation of outdoorsmen and a vital architect of the League's financial stability. His skill in authoring several successful grant applications has directly bolstered the BCLS fundraising efforts, providing the essential capital to support various programs and projects. These funds have been critical in hosting the League's annual Youth Outreach fishing derbies and enabling local children to attend the Massachusetts Junior Conservation Camp. From leading major capital projects to serving as the League's most dedicated raffle ticket advocate, Phil's legacy is defined by a deep-seated passion for the preservation of North American wildlife and the continued strength of the Berkshire sporting tradition.