

Noreen Clough (1944-2015)

In the 1970s, Noreen was a clerical worker at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. She had a degree in English, got an additional degree in biology so she could move up at the Service, only to discover that the men didn't want her moving up. "Not only did the guys not want a woman out doing field work with them, but their wives also didn't want them in the field with a woman," Clough said in a 2006 interview.

"The organization had been all male for a very long time, and biology was seen as a subject for men." She was even denied a promotion once because, according to her boss, she didn't need a promotion because she had a husband. "It was a continued uphill struggle," said Clough.

Clough did not let small minds keep her down. Early in her career she led the Interagency Work Group that oversaw the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil and gas assessment program and was lead author on the report to Congress. She persevered and 20 years later, became Southeast Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the first woman to serve in such a position. She was no longer managing the logbooks. She was managing 2,000 people and a budget of \$82 million.

She later held a variety of leadership positions within the FWS in the Washington, DC headquarters, including Acting Deputy Director for External Affairs, Chief of Resource Management for the National Wildlife Refuge System and Deputy Assistant Director for Fisheries.

Clough was unflappable and persistent, no matter how much others pushed back. And she was dedicated, doing whatever it took to get something accomplished. That tenacity earned her several awards, including American Sportfishing Association Woman of the Year, the U.S. Department of the Interior Meritorious Service Award, and the Coleman Outdoors Award.

Clough retired from the FWS and became B.A.S.S.'s national conservation director from 2004 to 2007 when the organization was owned by ESPN. She assisted the B.A.S.S. Nation's state conservation directors, supporting them with their issues, advocating for them to state agencies or the U.S. Congress.

She represented B.A.S.S. and bass anglers on numerous national boards involved in fisheries policy including the Sport Fishing & Boating Partnership Council, the Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, the Berkley Conservation Institute, the American Sportfishing Association, and the National Fish Habitat Partnership.

Although she retired from B.A.S.S. in 2007, she came back less than 5 years later following the sale of the company to a group of private investors. She returned not for the money. She came back because being involved in securing access for anglers, in eradicating invasive species, in protecting habitat for bass was important to her.

Clough spent more than 36 years in natural resource conservation but often said, "My best years have been those at B.A.S.S. It's been rewarding to see the B.A.S.S. Nation Conservation program grow and deliver amazing on-the-ground conservation and angler benefits."

Throughout her life, Noreen was an avid angler. One of her favorite extracurricular activities was serving as a member of the Michigan State University Fly Gals team, in which she mentored graduate students in sportfishing and conservation advocacy. She not only enjoyed making a difference; she liked to show others they can make a difference, too.

She put a high value on lessons learned from recreational fishing from both a resource understanding and appreciation perspective, but also from a perspective of understanding anglers and how they think and react to resource and social issues. She saw this basis as being valuable to researchers, field managers and administrators when attempting to get resource user groups to respect and understand one another and be able to work toward a common goal for the resource in a constructive manner.

Noreen passed away in January 2015 after a brief battle with pancreatic cancer, but her legacy of determination and success is an inspiration to women in natural resources conservation. In 2016 the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society and the Black Bass Conservation Committee established the Noreen Clough Memorial Scholarship for Females in Fisheries to honor that legacy.

Scholarship Application Information - Application Deadline is April 15, 2026

Criteria: All nominees should be a female student currently enrolled in a **graduate program** at a recognized institution in North America with an expected graduation date no earlier than December 2026. This does not specifically have to be a fisheries science program, but the student must demonstrate a commitment toward a career in fishery management or research. The student selected will best reflect Noreen's passion and commitment to the profession *and* to the sport of fishing.

To Apply: Prepare an **original essay**, no longer than 500 words, which describes why you believe you are deserving of this scholarship and how being a recreational angler is relevant to becoming a more diverse and insightful professional. Applicants may want to include career aspirations, personal interests, or other relevant factors in the essay.

Additionally, please attach a current **resume** which includes:

- Full name
- Complete postal mailing address
- Email address where you can be reached even in the summer if you are away from school
- Best telephone/cell number
- School name and location
- Degree sought
- Expected graduation date
- Summary of your education
- Summary of work history
- Other relevant experience/qualifications/references

Applicants will be scored on the following:

- Importance of fishing in their personal life
- Graduate study relevancy to sport fishing, either directly or indirectly
- Career goals
- Quality of the essay
- Publications
- Presentations
- Involvement in professional societies

Email the essay and resume, scanned together as a **single PDF** file to Gene Gilliland at ggilliland@bassmaster.com.