

*Summary: American Fisheries Society Mid-year Meeting/Retreat, 29 January 2014, Kansas City, Missouri.*

## **Proposed Revisions to Advocacy Procedures**

Following pre-meeting readings and polls, and discussion of multiple examples of advocacy issues, the Governing Board developed a set of proposed revisions to the AFS Advocacy Procedures:

### **A. AFS Advocacy Guidance**

Issue Selection Criteria (i.e., deciding whether to act)

1. Is the issue pertinent to AFS goals, mission, or strategic plan goals? Is AFS an appropriate organization to address the issue?
2. Is there an existing AFS document (policy, resolution, position statement, other document) that guides a response?
3. Is AFS involvement worth the investment of time and resources?
4. In the judgment of the leadership, is there likely to be membership support? What is the likelihood of substantial membership dissention on the issue?
5. Is the issue supported by the best available scientific information? If so, can AFS support the position? If not, can AFS provide additional scientific information?
6. Does the urgency of the issue warrant Executive (i.e., Executive Director and President, Officer, or other leaders) action without seeking Governing Board or membership approval? If so, does AFS have sufficient time to be effectively and credibly involved by producing a science-based statement?
7. Is AFS willing to follow through with letters, social media, and press releases? Does the issue have a champion who is willing to take this to the next step?
8. Are there other concerned scientific societies that can operate jointly with AFS to provide a stronger scientific position?

What are the Action Steps (i.e., deciding who does what and when)?

1. Member, Committee, Unit, or non-AFS entity raises concern/issue.
2. Executive, Unit, or Committee reviews and recommends action to AFS Executive Director and Officers, Management Committee or Governing Board.
3. AFS Executive Director and Officers, Management Committee or Governing Board reviews appropriate action. The Governing Board will review the issue if possible. However, many situations involve a rapidly developing policy issue that cannot wait for member, Governing Board or Management Committee action. Assuming that the Officers and Executive Director were elected and hired, respectively, to make responsible decisions, the Executive Director and Officers may review the proposed action. They also should determine which unit(s) of AFS is(are) best positioned to respond to the issue (considering spatial scale, geography, topic, importance). In those cases they will notify the

Governing Board of the decision and its rationale. Regardless of who reviews the issue, they should ultimately:

- a. Engage in broader consultation by soliciting and sharing alternative views;
- b. Consult with other AFS Units (e.g., Sections, Divisions, Chapters, Committees);
- c. Solicit membership review; or
- d. Take action.

### Possible Actions

1. Send a letter requesting action or providing comments;
2. Draft a resolution;
3. Draft a policy statement;
4. Recommend an educational forum; or
5. Deny the requested action and provide brief justification for doing so.

### **Congressional Activities/Briefings**

Background. Congressional staffers need unbiased scientific information and guidance on language for legislation. AFS has provided briefings on aquaculture and climate change (in 2013 with Potomac Chapter). Sea Grant (Knauss) Congressional fellows also can help AFS identify topics, coordinate events, and disseminate information. AFS needs to build relationships with Congressional staff and members to help identify topics and issues. Congressional Sportsman's Caucus may be a group for AFS to partner with. Often helps to have Congressional testimony from members from their home states.

### Topics:

Non-native, invasive species (e.g. Asian carp).

NFHAP (inadequate funding; potential economic returns from funding; challenges of moving funds through the USFWS/NFHAP funding mechanism; make the process more partner friendly; Sportsman's Act has not been successful in the past).

Fish culture and hatcheries (HaMAR), AFS policy statement on commercial aquaculture, AADAP (include FHC and FTC).

Effects of various energy sources (e.g. fracking, hydropower, fossil fuels, nuclear) on fisheries.

Effects of water withdrawals (related to mining), fragmentation, and dams on aquatic systems.

Inappropriate post-disaster environmental responses (e.g. channelization/floods; dispersants/oil spills; misdirected funds).

Effects of land use (urban, agriculture, silviculture, mining) on fish and fisheries.

### Need to Be More Proactive

Establish a Society emerging concerns committee. Challenge would be in getting people to volunteer to be involved. Currently have Resolution, External Affairs, Resource Policy and others. Need to ensure that these committees are better integrated. External Affairs Committee focuses on working with press and external media; Resolutions Committee is often not forward-looking; Resource Policy Committee has a substantial backlog of existing policies to review. Ask all AFS units to include emerging concerns in their annual reports. Link with Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership. Consult advocacy guidelines of other professional scientific societies.

### **Miscellaneous**

Some students feel intimidated by professionals at meetings. How can we each reduce this impression? It is key for professionals to engage students (student-mentor lunches/socials; be friendly).

We lose members when they shift status from student to young professional. How can we reduce this loss? Suggestions: young professional registration rate at Society annual meetings; young professional subsection in Education Section.

A meeting planner would be useful for some Chapters and less so for others. Depends on Chapter size, level of host Agency support, level of fund raising, choice of planner services.

The Officers and Executive Director need to communicate with the Canadian Aquatic Resources Section and the Mexico Chapter regarding how the Society might assist them with advocacy (and other) critical issues. Bill Franzin agreed to bring this up with CARS; Bob Hughes and Doug Austen will discuss this with the Mexico Chapter and Western Division leadership in Mazatlan in April.

### **Possible Topics for the Quebec City Retreat** (in each case we will need to bring in outside experts)

How to communicate science to non-scientists.

How to engage and retain young professional members.

How to implement AFS distance learning.

### **Impressions of New Management Committee—Governing Board Operations (most motions handled via monthly Management Committee calls; minutes sent to Governing Board; mid-year meeting in retreat format; option to participate via GoToMeeting remotely)**

Decision-making process satisfactory.

GoToMeeting successful despite minor technical problems.

Face-to-face interactions in and outside the official meetings are important. Sections and Divisions need to ensure physical presence of Officers or Proxies at the summer Governing Board meeting. This should be a consideration of whether a Unit is active and during the nomination/election of the officer, rather than an expectation that the Society can fund Unit travel.

The major decisions of the Management Committee should be summarized at the mid-year and annual Governing Board meetings.

Specific goals for the retreats are needed in advance of the retreat.

The major function of the Governing Board in this new format is oversight regarding contentious issues.

The 2015 midyear Governing Board meeting will likely be held on 2 February following the midyear meeting of the AFS Southern Division in Savannah, Georgia, which is scheduled for 28 January—1 February.

Moy moved and Margraf seconded to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 17:10.