

Strategic Plan

AFS 2020 Vision

AFS Strategic Plan for 2010-2014

November 10, 2009

Preamble

The American Fisheries Society has followed a pattern of preparing an organizational strategic plan every five years. This new plan will steer the Society during 2010 – 2014, but has been crafted with a vision to 2020 and beyond. The AFS Strategic Plan Revision Committee used information from a 2008 AFS member survey and input from several committees and the Governing Board to develop a draft Plan. The Committee then submitted the draft to the Governing Board and the members (via the Internet), for their review and input. The Plan contains a worldview of the fisheries future, revised AFS mission and vision statements, and three goal statements with objectives and suggested strategies under each goal. The three overarching Plan goals cover: 1) Global Fisheries Leadership, 2) Education, and 3) Values of Membership. The Plan does not include specific actions. Rather, it is suggested that the annual operational plans of the Society, and each of its subunits, include development of specific actions to implement the Plan.

In short, we must plan for the unpredictable, seize opportunity, and thrive on change. We will use our collective intellectual capacity to the fullest to achieve our goals. It is recommended that implementation of the new Plan include an online reporting system where AFS unit leaders can report their accomplishments under each objective and share their unit's ideas for implementing the Plan. This new Plan builds on the many successful and popular activities that AFS already engages in, such as our annual meetings and publications, and emphasizes topics the Committee believed could be improved upon. Among the many topics included in the Plan, innovative ideas are presented for: increasing workforce and member diversity, expanded use of electronic communication technologies, additional fisheries resource policy promotion, and increasing retention and recruitment of members.

Worldview of the Fisheries Future

The future context within which fisheries science and management will occur will have significant changes from that of the previous Strategic Plan:

1. Globalization of trade and transportation will require greater cross-border understanding of the opportunities, threats and cultural perspectives affecting international stock management, invasive species, and disease introductions.
2. Climate change will drive decision-making for aquatic habitat protection and rehabilitation due to impacts on migration, invasive species, disease epidemiology, water supplies, food production, and energy resources.
3. Economic pressure, volatile markets, a transient and retiring workforce, and demands from rising economies will require organizations to do more with fewer resources, modify their training and hiring practices, and dramatically restructure some commercial and recreational fisheries, as well as restructure use of and access to aquatic resources.
4. Ecosystem-based management coupled with social and economic concerns will continue to drive research and management agendas that will, by necessity, be shared among agencies operating as consortia.
5. Nature deficit syndrome brought about by increasing urbanization and electronic media will present challenges with constituents who have minimal exposure to and appreciation for the scientific principles that control fisheries and

ecosystem function, while at the same time being more receptive to environmentally sound “green” approaches, all of which affect the public perception of fisheries research and management practices.

6. Electronic communication and social networking will be the predominant means of interacting, particularly among young professionals, international colleagues, and dispersed organizations, replacing participation in traditionally-structured meetings. Professional societies will be expected to serve as information intermediaries that provide quality assurance and technical insight.
7. The business model for professional societies and government will shift to include greater demand for: services that immediately benefit members, more direct participatory decision-making in collective actions, and operation as an intelligent, adaptive, knowledge-based organization.

AFS 2020 Vision

To respond effectively to this future context, an organizational vision for AFS was developed:

The members of the American Fisheries Society (AFS) envision a future where world-wide fisheries production is optimized and sustained while structural and functional conditions of marine, freshwater, and estuarine ecosystems are maintained.

AFS will be the premier organization of fisheries-related professionals that:

1. Supports recruitment, training, and retention of fisheries professionals with a diverse array of technical skills to meet the needs for workforce continuity and adaptability.
2. Promotes sound, science-based research, management, and aquaculture practices for the conservation of fisheries populations, aquatic communities, and their habitats.
3. Functions as an intermediary for evaluation, interpretation, and transfer of high quality fisheries related information using the best available communications technology.
4. Prepares and positions fisheries information to inform society on how social, economic, and political decisions alter the world’s rivers, lakes, estuaries, and oceans, and the fisheries resources that depend on those habitats.
5. Provides forums for effective discourse contributing to the identification of science-based solutions to local, national, and global fisheries-related issues.
6. Supports an integrated network of AFS Units that collaborate to fulfill the Society’s mission.
7. Promotes diversity in the natural resources workforce to reflect the broad range of perspectives and skills needed to address complex fisheries issues.
8. Builds partnerships with other natural resource professional and scientific organizations to achieve common goals.
9. Supports adequate and stable funding for fisheries research and management.

AFS Mission Statement

Mission Statement: The American Fisheries Society will advance sound science, promote professional development, and disseminate science-based fisheries information for the global protection, conservation, and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems.

The mission of AFS will be carried out effectively, and our organizational vision will be attained, if each of the Goals described below is met. Conservation and sustainability will be achieved through stewardship, restoration, and responsible use of fishery

resources and aquatic ecosystems. Fisheries, aquaculture, and aquatic science will be advanced through developing and disseminating research-based information to a variety of audiences and by enhancing the public image of fisheries professionals. Professionalism and excellence in research, policy, management, education, and public outreach will characterize the activities of AFS members.

AFS 2020 Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goal 1: Global Fisheries Leadership

AFS will be a global leader providing information and technical resources for the sustainability and conservation of fisheries resources.

Objective 1.1. Promote fisheries conservation throughout North America and the world, at all levels of government and society, and among all levels of AFS by supporting sound science and networking opportunities (see also Objective 3.4)

Strategies

1. Continue to host and sponsor excellent conferences and meetings at local, regional, and international levels of AFS to provide the platform for managers and scientists to exchange ideas.
Suggestion: Meetings and conferences will be convened in cooperation with other organizations.
Suggestion: Ensure that AFS meetings are as environmentally responsible as possible.
Suggestion: Encourage remote participation via electronic media including webcasts and videos.
2. Maintain and improve the excellence and expedience of AFS publications.
3. Identify and network with global, professional, and conservation organizations to promote mutual goals of conservation and encourage cooperation among professionals of different scientific societies.
4. Help lead the World Council of Fisheries Societies and strive to unite fisheries scientists worldwide to improve knowledge and conservation of the world's fish stocks.
5. Work closely with interested foundations and agencies to increase funding and create endowments to support programs within AFS.
6. Encourage support for increased funds to support state/provincial, federal, academic, and tribal fisheries programs, particularly critical research and monitoring.
7. Build stronger partnerships with fisheries-related stakeholders, such as anglers, commercial harvesters, aquaculturists, watershed groups, and local governments, to promote benefits to fisheries among the array of competing demands on aquatic resources.
Suggestion: Solicit and document annual comments and input from external resource stakeholders.
8. Continue to pursue international relationships and establishment of additional units as needed worldwide.

Objective 1.2. Increase science-based fisheries conservation by increasing interactions with AFS members and government policy makers.

Strategies

1. AFS headquarters and all Units will use established guidelines for responsible science-based advocacy activities.

2. Communicate AFS goals for aquatic stewardship in resource advocacy more effectively through the use of sound science as it relates to fisheries conservation.
3. Increase policy activity by producing additional science-based position statements, conferences, books, and symposia on important fisheries topics while maintaining and updating current position statements.

Suggestion: Topics could include global overfishing, oxygen-depleted “dead zones”, climate change effects on fisheries, toxic lead in the aquatic environment, and many others.

Suggestion: Develop and support standard sampling methods for population and assemblage assessments to enable greater exchange and comparison of data within and among institutions.

4. Promote fisheries programs and research by focusing on how AFS can accomplish interaction through use of more online communication tools.
5. Collaborate with leading fisheries organizations and consultants to facilitate the preparation of background documents for AFS policy statements.
6. Communicate to key government leaders, NGOs, and the private sector the importance of fish and their habitats to the extent that they give high priority to dedicated, sufficient funding.
7. Develop an effective network to promote best-science-based fisheries conservation and aquatic habitat protection and restoration, targeting local, state/provincial, regional, and national legislators.

Suggestion: Consider networks such as the North American Agenda for Aquatic Resources.

Objective 1.3. Promote fisheries conservation through development and dissemination of public outreach materials. (See also Objective 3.4)

Strategies

1. Increase the emphasis on fisheries science and aquatic conservation-related outreach materials produced for non-scientists, teachers, and the public through diverse media.

Suggestion: Work with NOAA, Outdoor Writers Association, and other organizations.

Suggestion: Media could include TV, radio, and articles for popular outdoor periodicals.

2. Collaborate with other groups to develop and disseminate outreach materials.

Suggestion: Groups may include anglers, teachers, Fisheries Conservation Foundation, and Sea Grant.

Suggestion: Materials could include pamphlets, fellowships, and workshops.

3. Increase attention to marine and estuarine issues by working with members and appropriate Units to address top priorities.

Goal 2: Education/Continuing Education

AFS will facilitate life-long learning through world-class educational resources at all academic levels and provide training for practicing professionals in all branches of fisheries and aquatic sciences.

Objective 2.1. Encourage educational institutions at all levels to maintain excellent academic programs in fisheries sciences and related disciplines to assure recruitment of fisheries professionals that meet the needs of employers.

Strategies

1. Guide colleges and universities to maintain, modify, or develop curricula of the highest quality for both undergraduate and graduate students that provide an array of courses and experiences needed to effectively manage and conserve fisheries resources and meet the needs of employers.
2. Encourage colleges and universities to strive for diversity among students in fisheries sciences and related fields reflecting the composition of society.
3. Promote and encourage academic excellence, public leadership, and youth development in fisheries through science programs at all educational levels.

Objective 2.2. Ensure that the fisheries professional certification program reflects the integration of many sciences relevant to fisheries while ensuring its recognition as a mark of scientific excellence and expertise.

Strategies

1. Promote the professional certification program and the benefits of certification to universities, AFS members, other fisheries-related professions, and law professionals.

Suggestion: Review the professional certification program to make it relevant to the array of disciplines represented by AFS members and employers.

Suggestion: Evaluate the fees and administrative costs of the AFS certification program relative to other professional societies.

Objective 2.3. Provide a wide array of continuing education opportunities using innovative methods to reach the widest possible audience of fisheries professionals.

Strategies

1. Coordinate continuing education activities among all levels of AFS using cost-effective and user-friendly means.
2. Offer continuing education courses on a wide array of topics that are pertinent to AFS members by a variety of means.
3. Develop effective distance education methods by researching those used by universities and other professional societies and determining costs and benefits associated with various strategies.
4. Provide training and classroom materials for instructors aimed at the public, fishers, teachers, and K12 students.

Goal 3: Value of Membership

AFS will serve its members and fisheries, aquaculture, and aquatic science constituencies to fulfill the mission of the Society.

Objective 3.1. Determine and respond to the needs and opinions of AFS members.

Strategies

1. Regularly survey members to identify their needs and opinions on a broad range of AFS issues.

Suggestion: Maintain updated records of membership and unit officers to allow for easy polling.

Suggestion: Information can be gathered via web-based forums, surveys, or other means.

2. Provide a web-based forum for members to communicate with each other and the AFS leadership.
3. Utilize standing and special committees at multiple levels of AFS (e.g., Chapters, Divisions, Sections, and Parent Society) to effectively respond to membership concerns.
4. Consider survey results and feedback from the Membership Concerns Committee when developing AFS guiding documents and plans (annual plans of work/operational plans, the AFS Strategic Plan, etc.).
5. Maintain a leadership role in providing information and training to enhance salaries commensurate with training investments, safety, and working conditions for fishery professionals.
6. Communicate to employers the value of leadership, planning, collaboration, and communication skills that employees develop through active involvement in AFS.

Suggestion: Agencies can also support their staff in serving as officers and by sharing the cost of membership and professional certification.

7. Ensure AFS services and products are affordable, viable, and beneficial to members.
8. Encourage recognition of volunteer contributions to the success of the Society at all levels through awards and other mechanisms.
9. Provide quality information management and communication services to all members.

Suggestion: For example the AFS Jobs Bulletin

Suggestion: Use most up to date software to maintain membership lists

Objective 3.2. Enhance participation of students and professionals at all levels of the society to assure recruitment, retention, and leadership development into the future.

Strategies

1. Provide a wide array of opportunities for college and university students and professionals at all levels to participate in AFS and experience the benefits of membership.

Suggestion: Internships, travel grants, scholarships, reduced registration

Suggestion: Mentoring and guidance on mentoring to provide consistent experience

2. Provide services and guidance on building organizational capacity in AFS units.

Suggestion: Leadership training, web development, fundraising, relationships within AFS hierarchy, congress of AFS leaders

3. Develop a marketing plan for increasing college and university faculty and student participation in AFS.

Suggestion: Faculty sponsorship of students

Objective 3.3. Promote diversity within AFS and the fisheries profession.

Strategies

1. Remove obstacles to full participation of under-represented groups (including women) in AFS meetings, publication activities, and governance.

Suggestion: Mentoring program for female members, childcare and family friendly activities at annual meetings

2. Educate and engage the AFS membership in diversity related issues.
3. Increase the visibility of fisheries and natural resource sciences, environmental awareness, and career opportunities to under-represented populations, especially in minority-serving institutions.
4. Support efforts of professional and academic organizations involved in increasing diversity in student and professional populations in fisheries and natural resource careers.
5. Develop scholarships for under-represented groups at all college and university levels to facilitate recruitment into AFS and the fisheries profession.

Suggestion: Opportunities similar to Hutton or J. Frances Allen scholarships

6. Collaborate with indigenous peoples of the Americas to identify and address common concerns within the fisheries profession.
7. Foster reciprocal society membership with members of the World Fisheries Council to increase international participation in AFS.

Objective 3.4. Develop innovative and cost effective methods to make fisheries science and management information readily available to AFS members and all levels of government entities worldwide.

Strategies

1. Pursue open access formats for publications.
2. Develop cost-effective means to broadcast AFS meetings and disseminate information to AFS members at all levels.

Suggestion: Electronic media including web casts and videos

Suggestion: Increase remote participation

3. Encourage development of regional, topic-oriented meetings separate from the annual meeting.
4. Develop online virtual centers of excellence to tackle issues of concern to fisheries professionals.
5. Foster online forums to encourage member communication.

Suggestion: New online marine journal web forum

6. Develop a method for state/provincial and federal agencies, consulting firms, and other employers of fisheries professionals to make technical reports and gray literature electronically accessible.

Objective 3.5. Practice good governance and organizational management.

Strategies

1. Improve the transparency and continuity of governance procedures and Society decision-making .

Suggestion: Governing board meeting minutes on AFS website

Suggestion: Updated documentation of society practices

2. Develop cost-effective and efficient means of managing membership information that will allow for better organization and governance of AFS units.

Suggestion: Access for unit leaders to recent membership information

3. Develop a universal process for all units to preserve the long-term institutional memory of AFS by archiving important documents and other communications and making archives available to AFS membership.
4. Ensure that AFS remains financially secure.
5. Implement this Strategic Plan, including an online process for reporting progress.

GLOSSARY

Advocacy: Acting to promote, recommend, or favor a particular cause, action, or alternative.

Angler: A person who fishes with hook and line as a hobby or sport.

Aquaculture: The cultivation of aquatic organisms in controlled environments.

Aquatic: Any water-based or water-dependent environment or system including marine, freshwater, estuarine, lake, riverine, and wetland systems.

Assemblage: Closely related groups within a biological community, e.g., a fish assemblage.

Collaborate: To work with others in the achievement of common goals.

Commercial harvesters: Individuals or industries who harvest or collect aquatic resources for sale or trade.

Community: All plant and animal populations occupying a given area and having substantial interactions.

Conservation: The act of preserving or protecting biological communities and the products they yield, as may be the case with fish and aquatic systems.

Continuing education: Educational opportunities extending beyond formal college or university curricula, generally applies to enhancement or extension of professional skills.

Distance education: Educational opportunities, often continuing education, obtainable outside the immediate location of a college or university.

Diversity: Variety in form or character, as in a group that varies culturally, racially, physically, by religious beliefs, and by gender.

Ecosystem: A system formed by the interactions of a community of organisms among themselves and with their environment, generally involves large geographic extents.

Ecosystem-based management: Manipulation of ecosystems for human benefit while considering all forms of interactions among the community of organisms comprising the system.

Estuarine: An adjective describing the part of a river system that flows into a sea and is affected by the sea's tide and intrusion of water with dissolved sea salts.

Fishery: An aquatic ecosystem from which aquatic organisms are harvested for commercial uses or sport, including the people, boats, and/or gear used in the harvest.

Fisheries professional: A person employed or engaged in an area of study, research, or management of fishery resources who is expected by employers and peers to be ethical and technically proficient. A fisheries professional is a category of aquatic resource professional.

Fisheries science: Application of the principles of science to the study of fisheries, systematic study of fisheries using observed facts to make inference about the functioning of the system and effects of harvest of aquatic organisms.

Fishers: Individuals who participate in either commercial or sport fishing.

Freshwater: Water that does not contain a large concentration of dissolved salts, as are generally found in inland lakes and streams.

Gray literature: Scientific publications that have not been subjected to an anonymous peer-review process determining their scientific merit.

Habitat: The place in which a plant or animal can survive in nature, that natural environment that provides the needed elements for reproduction, growth, and survival of an organism.

Invasive species: A species of plant or animal with the ability to establish populations outside of its natural range, often with negative effects on native species.

Leadership: Exerting the function of a leader, that is a person or group who guides or directs an aggregate of people.

Life-long learning: Continued learning throughout the life of an individual, often used in reference to continuing education.

Marine: Pertaining to the sea, in reference to plants and animals that have the ability to live in water with high dissolved salt concentrations as found in seas.

Nature Deficit Syndrome: A situation described by author, Richard Louv, in his book, *Last child in the woods*, in which American children suffer from a loss of contact with nature and subsequent impoverished lives and stunted imaginations.

Overfishing: Harvesting of fish or other aquatic organisms from a fishery to the extent that the maximum productivity of fish is reduced due to that taking of too many fish early in their life span or too many reproducing adults.

Professional diversity reflects the number and heterogeneity of members in terms of academic discipline, occupation, employer, subject matter expertise, educational background, and work experience.

Recruitment: The addition of individuals to a population, such as members of a professional society.

Retention: Retaining the membership of individuals in a population, such as members of a professional society.

Stakeholder: An individual or group with an interest, generally financial or ethical, in the outcome of decisions or policy-making activities.

Stewardship: Management of another's property or affairs in a fair and ethical manner, often applied to the management of natural resources by professionals, such as fisheries professionals.

Sustainability: Fisheries and other aquatic resources are sustainable when they, and the ecosystems that support them, are managed in such a way that their optimal viability and productivity are maintained for the benefit of future generations.

Transparency: Open, frank, and candid in operation, such as in the administration of a professional society.

3/6/09, gmw