**Report to the Governing Board**

To: Donna Parish, President, AFS

From: Doug Workman and Abigail Lynch, Co-chairs, Membership Committee

Date: February 26, 2015

**Summary**

A survey was conducted in 2014 to identify current perceptions and preferences regarding the value of AFS membership and its associated benefits. The membership survey included participation from current AFS members as well as non-members with interests in the fisheries professions as part of the data for subsequent analyses. We conducted an analysis of the **2,741** survey respondents,where **the goal of the analysis was to identify global trends among all respondents with respect to steps AFS could evaluate as a means to improve society membership numbers and the overall experience for society members through value-added membership benefits**. For the purposes of this analysis, survey questions that specifically addressed membership benefits or membership retention were evaluated. Most of the survey questions evaluated in this analysis included an option to provide comments. Comments were compiled separately and are included within this document (see [Comments](#Comments)).

Two recurring trends were noted during analyses of survey respondents:

1. High membership and meeting registration fees were frequently cited as a possible limitation or barrier to retaining and recruiting members.
2. Survey respondents indicated that a higher value of membership appreciation could be achieved through improved information dissemination, an expansion of continuing education opportunities, and more professional development and mentorship opportunities.

Recommendations were developed from the survey responses and are currently being considered by the Membership Committee. These recommendations will be used to guide future actions to increase membership and enhance current membership benefits. The recommendations developed from the membership survey are described below and are intended to serve as a framework to focus and refine future actions that will be considered by the Membership Committee on behalf of AFS.

The membership committee has also developed several proposed responses to the survey findings that are currently being implemented and considered for immediate action. These “Immediate Responses” are described below and will serve as a framework for implementation and further consideration by the Membership Committee in the upcoming year.

**Recommendations**

**Membership rates**

* Determine if AFS membership and meeting registration fees are consistent with similar professional organizations
* Consider tiered membership rates (by salary; like ESA)
* Consider a “corporate” membership – reduced price per individual, paid by organizations
* Consider payment schedules
* Consider a “family” membership
* Consider incentives for continual membership (e.g., 10 years of consecutive regular rate membership can be applied to a lifetime membership)
* Some students did not appear to be aware of the young professional membership

**Improve "member only" benefits**

* Distill journal issues into key point email blasts for members with jumps to full articles
* Provide more online opportunities (webinars, remote participating in meetings)
* Overhaul professional certification
* Members only job postings
* Members only funding opportunities and awards

**Information packets**

* Provide new members with "welcome packets," a letter from the president, and an assigned "mentor" for their first year in AFS
* Provide strategic "publicity packets" for different audiences (students, managers, high level administrators) with information on why AFS membership benefits their careers and their organizations

**Student/young professional retention**

* Provide opportunities for mentoring, networking, and leadership
* Career services, professional development, and internships

**Rationale for chapter-only/lapsed/never members**

* Negative experiences at the national level ("too academic")
* Technical difficulties with website / needed more reminders
* Cost not covered by employer

**Potential for recruitment**

* Federal, state, tribal, and local governments
* NGOs, environmental consulting firms, and the private sector
* Aquaculture professionals
* International fisheries community (with developing country membership rate)
* “Beyond finfish” – other fisheries, other disciplines related to fisheries
* Special stakeholder memberships (commercial/recreational fishers, etc.)
* High school and undergraduates (through expanded mentoring programs)
* “Joint” aquatic society memberships (reduced rate for two partner organizations)

**Advocacy**

* Very contradictory recommendations – some want MUCH more; some want absolutely none

**Proposed Immediate Responses**

* Journal summary blasts as a high traffic, "value-added" benefit for members (*perhaps AFS can hire an intern to produce these?*)
* Consider a webinar series (*maybe one a month with the authors of the cover article from Fisheries?*)
* The young professionals mentoring pilot program (following the Hoffman and Lynch proposal to the Governing Board)
* “Welcome" and "publicity" packets for new members and to recruit members

**Results**

The following membership survey results represent responses to questions related to AFS membership and membership value. Survey questions, responses, and summaries are organized according topics that are highlighted in bold font.

**Membership Recruiting and Retention** –*What can AFS do to retain members?*

The majority of survey respondents indicated education opportunities were the most important factor in member retention.

**What can AFS do to retain members?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Number of responses** |
| Nothing | 15 |
| More public outreach | 467 |
| More mentoring | 474 |
| More education | 1,013 |

Opinions about AFS efforts towards retaining and recruiting regular members differed from opinions to retain and recruit young professionals. The majority of survey respondents indicated efforts were adequate to retain regular members, where the majority of respondents indicated AFS is not doing enough to retain and recruit young professionals.

**How do you feel about efforts to recruit and retain the following members?**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Regular Members** | **Young Professionals** |
| **Options** | **Number of responses** | **Number of responses** |
| Adequate | 1,019 | 166 |
| Not enough | 613 | 216 |
| Too Much | 6 | 2 |

**How should AFS recruit and retain members of the following type?**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Regular Members** | **Students** | **Young Professionals** |
| **Options** | **Number of responses** | **Number of responses** | **Number of responses** |
| Cheaper Membership Fee | 692 | 210 | 270 |
| Special Awards | 64 | 90 | 103 |
| Cheaper Meeting Reg. Fee | 390 | 192 | 239 |
| Travel Awards | 208 | 197 | 193 |
| Leadership | 187 | 182 | 205 |
| Mentorship | 199 | 192 | 218 |

Responses to survey options for recruiting and retaining members varied by member type. All respondents preferred cheaper society membership fees. Regular member responses also indicated a preference to cheaper meeting registration fees. Special awards garnered the lowest survey response among regular members, students, and young professionals. Cheaper meeting registration fee, leadership opportunities and mentorship benefits were relatively similar in number of responses for student and young professionals.

**Activities to enhance membership benefit**

Aquatic resources/conservation management, habitat management, and education where the top three responses to the following question that were designed to identify means to improve membership value:

**What kind of outreach and advocacy activities would improve your membership value?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Number of responses** |
| Education | 1,144 |
| Habitat Management | 1,033 |
| Aquatic Resources/Conservation management | 1,423 |
| Public Policy | 972 |
| Funding | 910 |

Education was cited as an important membership value in at least two questions that also happened to have a high number of respondents. The most preferred education experience was a hand-on course in a one or two-day setting. Online self-paced course were also frequently selected as an option in the survey.

**What types of continuing education experience would you most prefer?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Number of responses** |
| Hands-on with practical application in a one or two day setting | 1,345 |
| Half-day hands-on education experience | 670 |
| Webinar | 651 |
| Online self-paced learning | 878 |

**Chapter vs. Society Membership**

We added the following question to try and identify why Chapter membership does not always translate into a Society membership. There were a total of 289 respondents to the following survey question.

**Which of the following best describes your reasoning for not establishing/maintaining a membership with the Society as part of your chapter membership dues?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Number of responses** |
| Thought I was a Society member by joining a chapter | 44 |
| Society activities not relevant to my Chapter involvement | 33 |
| Unsure how Society membership can benefit me at a chapter level | 105 |
| A Society membership not financially supported in my work environment | 179 |

Similar to other survey questions, financial reasons dominated the responses. The second-most selected answer seems to indicate a need for more communication with membership and potential members because respondents were unsure how Society membership can benefit them at a Chapter level.

**Former members**

The membership survey also attempted to identify why the Society loses members and to identify what we can explore as means to entice former members to join AFS again. Although the response rate was expectedly low (163 respondents), the most common reason for leaving AFS was financial.

**What caused you to leave AFS?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Number of responses** |
| Membership fee too high | 82 |
| Not enough time | 45 |
| changed careers | 12 |

When asked what would entice former members to rejoin AFS, the majority of responses were a desire to experience “more relevant communications.” Public outreach and mentoring opportunities were the next most frequent responses to this question.

**What would entice you to return to AFS?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Number of responses** |
| More public outreach | 14 |
| More relevant communications | 37 |
| More political advocacy | 5 |
| More mentoring opportunities | 15 |

**Comments**

**Never members** (110 comment responses)

*Why have you never joined AFS?*

* Cost and other commitments
  + Membership fee too high
  + Employer won’t pay for membership
  + Not enough time/member of too many other societies
* No topical relevance
  + Too fish-oriented for hydrologists, sea wildlife biologists
  + Does not support aquaculture interests
  + More focused on research than the management process
  + Too finfish focused
* Location
  + Netherlands, Nigeria, Turkey, Iran, Mexico, Canada, Argentina
* Technological difficulties
  + Difficulty with online enrollment
  + No response to email inquires
  + Website is confusing
* Not familiar with the organization/ unsure of benefits
* Certification requirements
  + Not eligible for certifications without fisheries degree
  + Certification requirements heavy on coursework and not real-world experience

*What can AFS do to encourage membership?*

* More advertisement
  + make the importance of fisheries better known
  + recruit college students and younger professionals
  + highlight opportunities for non-fisheries degree professionals and their value to the field
  + describe benefits to non-American members (Canada, Turkey, Mexico, developing countries)
  + encourage members from aquaculture
  + use social media
* Provide incentives and lower fees

*What organizations should AFS focus on for recruitment?*

* Regional fishery management councils
* Universities and ministries involved in fishing
* Federal and state natural resource agencies
* NGOs and consulting firms
* First Nations
* AGU, Aquatic Resources Education Association, TWS, Society of Conservation Biology, Society of Soil and Water Conservation
* Foreign fisheries societies (especially in developing countries), FAO, UNDP, IICA, ICAR
* Fishing clubs
* Water quality professionals (including waste water and drinking water)

**Lapsed members** (163 comment responses)

*Why did you leave AFS?*

* Forgot to renew
* Retired
* Costs and other commitments
  + Membership fee too high
  + Employer won’t pay for membership
  + Not enough time/member of too many other societies
* No topical relevance in current position
* Technological complications
  + Difficulty with online renewal
  + Website would not accept credit card
  + Frustration with online journal subscriptions
  + Problems with electronic communication
* No value
  + Received “little” for membership fee especially when subscriptions went online
  + Employer makes it impossible to attend meetings without presenting
  + Need more than a book discount/didn’t receive a book discount
  + Can get all the “benefits” as a non-member
* Education and certification
  + Only fisheries training – does not encompass public outreach or human dimensions
  + Certification requirements are not appropriate (e.g., calculus)
* Policy
  + Cannot support “AGW Policy”
  + “Too conservationist and biased”
  + “Too focused fishing/harvest”

*What would entice you to return to AFS?*

* More reminders to renew!!
* Provide incentives and lower fees
  + Lower conference registration for members
  + Better price incentives for books/journals
  + Free membership for recent graduates and 70+
  + Additional membership category between “young professional” and “regular”
  + Lower fees for international (developing country) members
  + Payment plans for dues
  + Consider a “corporate membership” for state agencies to support their employees
* Update online system
  + Allow selection at payment page rather than automatically listing previous memberships
  + Fix payment process
  + Improved online journal accessibility
* More lobbying for fisheries professionals
  + - Encourage employers to pay membership fees
    - Lobby federal agencies to relax meeting attendance policies
* Political positions
  + “Less political”
  + “More focus on application of quantitative methods in policy”
  + “Balanced view of fish conservation and development”
* Topical relevance
  + “More focus on recovery vs. fishing and harvest”
  + “More of an environmental focus”
  + “More water resources planning pertinence”
  + Add a journal on “applied techniques management”
* Education
  + More local education opportunities and remote education opportunities
  + Revised certification requirements
  + Promote certification as a requirement in agency hiring processes

*What organizations should AFS focus on for recruitment?*

* AFS student chapters
* State, Tribal, and federal agencies to promote incentives for membership
* Aquatic Resource Education Association
* Students – get involvement early on
* ASIH, Australian Society for Fish Biology,
* Conservation groups, TU
* Volunteer groups
* Private industry
* Women in science groups, minorities, and the poor
* Recreational fishermen
* EPA, Forest Service

**Chapter-only members** (289 comment responses)

*Why do you not maintain a Society membership with your Chapter membership?*

* Cost
  + *Fisheries* is the only benefit -- not enough
  + No effort to recruit veterans
  + Member of other national organizations
  + Had access to all member materials without membership
* Didn’t receive reminders
* Didn’t understand the hierarchy of AFS and the difference between the memberships
* Only join the Society when planning to attend the annual meeting
* The Society isn’t relevant
  + Not enough focus on fish culture
* Advocacy
  + “Disagree with the Society resolution that the THEORY of evolution is the only option that should be taught in school”
  + “Do not agree with the politics upper level AFS administration espouse”
  + “The Society doesn’t forward the agenda of conservation need. It focuses on science and professional development”
  + “My personal political views contrast those espoused by the upper level administration of AFS”
  + “No lobbying on behalf of fisheries workers”
* Negative experiences with Society

*What membership benefits provide the most value to you?*

* Job board
* Publications
  + *Fisheries*
  + Online access to journals
* Continuing education opportunities
  + Professional certification
  + Hands-on training
  + Mentor/intern programs
  + workshops
* GLOBAL network of fisheries professionals
* Meeting discounts
* Website

*What can AFS do to encourage membership?*

* Advertise better/more
  + Reducing fees isn’t the answer – people will pay if they think it is worth it
  + Highlight perks of membership at a national level
  + Recruit internationally – be less U.S. centric
  + Recruit professionals outside of fisheries management (e.g., water quality, water resources)
  + More communications to students – get them involved early to establish life-long commitment to AFS
  + Focus recruitment efforts on members that will sustain the organization and be involved
* Provide incentives and lower fees
  + Inform new members about the “ins and outs of AFS”
  + Have a “mentor” for the first year of new memberships
  + More awards; small grants to students or young professionals
  + Leadership opportunities
  + Considered a tier membership fee based on salary (like ESA)
  + If employer has access to the journals, no incentive for membership
* Advocacy
  + Be more vocal regarding issues facing fisheries (e.g., pollution/habitat loss)
  + Advocate for science in public policy
  + Demonstrate role in national fisheries conservation needs and politics
* Partner with other organizations
* Topical relevance to
  + Fisheries managers – too academic oriented
  + Professionals in aquatic ecology and water quality
  + Chapter members (have a national presence at the Chapter meetings)
  + Social scientists
* Education
  + More training opportunities (e.g., conflict resolution workshops)
  + More webinars
  + More field experiences
  + Broaden the certification program to include policy and administrators
* Outreach
  + Hold public outreach opportunities
  + Explain the value and benefit of AFS to agencies to encourage staff participation

*What can AFS do to retain members?*

* Journals
  + Better access to online journals
* Advocacy
  + “Be fair and even-handed in handling controversial issues”
  + “More advocacy in political arena”
  + “More presence on Capitol Hill – I want my dues to help pay for a presence in policy-making”
  + “Increased advocacy in state and federal politics”
* Topical relevance to
  + management
* Demonstrate value of AFS membership to members and the public
  + “Join AFS and get \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_”
  + Offer quality conferences at an affordable rate
* Education
  + Distance learning courses (reasonably priced)
* Provide incentives and lower fees
  + Introductory membership fee price for first five years
  + Improve online payment system

*What organizations should AFS focus on for recruitment?*

* Veterans
* Pond management groups
* Consulting firms
* Political organizations; NRA, BASS
* NGOs, bass tournament organizations, TU, TNC
* Private industry; commercial fishing companies, sport fishing companies, professional fishers, media fishing, and fisheries product manufacturers
* Federal, state, local, tribal governments (including non-traditional agencies – EPA, Army Corps)
* Focus on students and young professionals: universities (large and small), high schools, 4H, FFA, student sub-units -- “get ‘em while they are young”
* Local chapters
* Other government organizations: water rights resources, water districts, legislators, county and city commissioners

**Student members** (266 comment responses)

*What membership benefits provide the most value to you?*

* Career services/job board
* Publications
  + Online access to journals
  + Member book discounts
* Annual conferences
  + Networking opportunities
* Education
  + Online training/webinars
  + Mentoring opportunities
* Scholarships
* Student discounts

*What value do AFS sections add to your membership?*

* Increased networking opportunities
* Resume builder
* Focus on specific topics of interest/relevance
  + Relevant list serv
  + Specialized community
* Funding/travel support
* No discernable value
  + Just a newsletter list
  + Didn’t even get contacted by section after paying section fee

*What value do AFS chapters add to your membership?*

* Funding/travel support
* Mentoring opportunities
* Networking with local funders and state fisheries professionals

*What can AFS do to retain student members once they graduate?*

* Career services
* Reduced membership fees immediately after graduating
* Leadership opportunities
* Education
  + Hands-on training opportunities
  + Workshops and webinars
  + Mentorship opportunities
  + Professional development opportunities
* Publications
  + Online access to publications

*What can AFS do to encourage membership?*

* Advertise more/better
  + Demonstrate the value of membership
* Overhaul the professional certification process
* Provide incentives and lower fees
  + Serve as a liaison between professionals and job opportunities
  + Overhaul the professional certification process
    - Should be free to apply and then fee applied if qualified
    - Improve value of certification to employers
    - Let students know the requirements while they are still in school
  + Increased funding opportunities
  + Encourage leadership opportunities
* Education
  + Free workshops; online training
  + Reward members with reduced registration rates for national meeting if they attend chapter or division meetings
  + Internship opportunities between AFS and state and federal organizations that could turn into permanent jobs
* Topical relevance beyond fisheries (should be more interdisciplinary)
* Outreach to
  + University students; college clubs and organizations
  + The public
* Improve website
  + Make member benefits easily accessible on the site

*What can AFS do to retain members?*

* Incentives and lower membership fees
  + Reduced membership for young professionals
  + Job services
  + Focus on people “lower on the food chain”
  + Require membership for meeting attendance
  + Require membership of AFS to be a Chapter member
  + More publication opportunities (beyond academic/scientific writing)
* Outreach
  + Public education
  + Government agencies and employers to impress the importance of employee involvement
* Improve website

*What organizations should AFS focus on for recruitment?*

* Social scientists (Society for Applied Anthropology)
* Federal, state, tribal, local governments
* NGOs and conservation groups: Coastal Conservation Association
* Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Big Brothers Big Sisters, fishing clubs
* Universities (so that membership becomes a habit for students)
* Consulting companies/ private sector
* International arenas
* TWS, Freshwater Mollusk Conservation Society – consider joint aquatic sciences meetings
* “Students are the most important aspect of AFS – without new, young members the society will eventually crumble.”
* Stakeholder groups

**Young professional members** (174 comment responses)

*What membership benefits provide the most value to you?*

* Career services/job board
* Publications
  + Online access to journals
  + Member book discounts
* Annual conferences
  + Networking opportunities
* Continuing education
  + Online training/webinars
  + Mentoring opportunities
* Leadership opportunities
* Certification
* Policy updates
* Website

*What value do AFS sections add to your membership?*

* No involvement/no benefit
* Increased networking and collaboration opportunities
* Focus on specific topics of interest/relevance
  + Relevant list serv
  + Specialized community
* Valued sections: Fish health, larval fish, equal opportunities, water quality section
  + “It is the only reason I’m a member of AFS. The fish health section newsletter is a great resource.”

*What value do AFS chapters add to your membership?*

* Opportunity for local networking and collaboration
  + “Not great alternatives to national meeting but funding to travel is limited, so it is the best we can do.”
  + “Great place to learn about all fisheries in the state.”

*What can AFS do to retain young professional members as regular members?*

* Publications
  + Free access or significantly reduced costs
  + Add a publication directed at students and young professionals for a cheap subscription fee
* Continuing education
  + Easier access
  + Mentorship to obtain certification
* Reduced membership fees for first ten years of professional status
* Leadership opportunities
  + “AFS always asks for volunteers to step up, but they do little to go out and actively bring other personality types in.”
* Career services
  + Special meetings/courses aimed at young professionals
  + Networking opportunities for young professionals
  + Increase job opportunities and salary in the field

*What can AFS do to encourage membership?*

* Advertise more/better
  + Demonstrate the value of membership to:
    - agency administrators
    - potential members
    - current members
    - Canadians
  + Use social media maintain relationships with high school and university classrooms
* Increase relevance to:
  + Managers
    - “Right now, a lot of people look at AFS at the national level for folks in academia.”
  + Aquaculture and fish culture
  + Other disciplines
  + NGOs
* Overhaul the professional certification process
  + Add certifications for different types of careers (policy, management, etc.)
  + Make certifications more relevant
  + Emphasize the importance of certification at the student level
* Provide “members only” benefits
  + Add online and hands-on members only training, certifications, etc.
  + Mentoring opportunities beyond the annual meeting (not everyone can attend)
    - Publishing support
    - Programs that establish meaningful connections between experienced and emerging professionals
  + Members only job postings
  + Funding for members only – instill a sense of ownership in AFS
  + Provide option for remote participation in national conference
* Provide reduced membership fees
  + For longer periods for young professionals
  + Tiered membership rates
* Encourage participation/leadership in AFS activities, committees, sections, etc.
  + Provide more opportunities for young professionals to be involved in AFS governance
    - “AFS relies on volunteers to step up become active in AFS. However, not all people have the personality type to just blindly volunteer - it is intimidating. AFS needs to understand this and actively seek out members who want to be included, but do not have the personality type to just walk up to somebody and volunteer.”
  + Provide opportunities for younger professionals/students (especially women and minorities)
* Provide information “packets”
  + “Welcome packet” for new members with a letter/email from the chapter president
  + “Publicity packet” for universities to advertise to students and agencies

*What can AFS do to retain members?*

* Better membership privileges
  + Publication access is not enough when many get that through their employers
  + The annual meeting is not enough of a draw if many cannot attend
  + Facilitate connecting professionals and providing professional development online
    - Improve the accessibility of the website
    - Use social media more
    - Web-based training, mentoring, and conference participation
* Increase transparency of how membership fees are spent
* Advertise the young professional member benefits to students

*What organizations should AFS focus on for recruitment?*

* Federal, state, tribal, local governments
  + NEAFWA, SEAFWA
* Environmental consulting firms, NGOs, conservation groups: REEF, Monterey Bay Aquarium, TU, DU
* Fish industries: commercial fishing organizations, commercial fish farming operations, charter fisheries
* High schools, universities
* International organizations: Brasil’s AQUABIO

**Life/retired members** (125 comment responses [44 life; 81 retired])

*What membership benefits provide the most value to you?*

* Career services/job board
* Publications
  + Online access to journals
  + Member book discounts
  + *Fisheries*
  + Chapter newsletters
* Chapter and national conferences
  + Networking/collaboration opportunities
  + Keeping up with the latest issues and trends
* Professional development
  + Online training/webinars
  + In-person workshops
  + Mentoring opportunities
* Public policy positions based on science
* Website resources

*What value do AFS sections add to your membership?*

* No involvement/no benefit
  + Can cause “silo-ing” of specialties
* Increased networking and collaboration opportunities
  + Symposia
  + Some space for advocacy
  + Professional development
* Focus on specific topics of interest/relevance
  + Relevant communications (e.g., newsletter)
  + Specialized community

*What value do AFS chapters add to your membership?*

* Opportunity for local networking, mentoring, recruiting opportunities, and friendships
  + “More relevant to my day-to-day professional life than national meetings”
  + “Extremely valuable for early career professionals and students”

*What can AFS do to recruit and retain regular members?*

* Advocacy
* Advertise more/better
  + Target students and young professionals
  + Demonstrate the value of membership:
    - To agency administrators (how can AFS membership benefit the agency?)
    - To potential members by showing the translation to jobs/additional compensation
    - To non-traditional professionals (ecosystem, habitat, biodiversity, water, etc.)
    - Through advocacy on important fisheries management issues
* Increase relevance to:
  + Society (take cues from TWS)
  + Current problems facing fisheries (e.g., climate change)
* Provide “members only” benefits
  + Value-added communications
    - Distill journal issues into key points in an email blast for busy professionals – cut through information overload
  + Expand online opportunities for interacting with other members and professional resources (remote opportunities for webinars, training)
  + Recruit professionally active retired members to serve as mentors for younger members
  + Job assistance
  + Provide trainings *related* to fisheries (land use planning, biodiversity conservation, ecological sustainability)
* Overhaul professional certification to make it more relevant to career advancement
* Provide reduced fees
  + Reduce conference costs, particularly for younger professionals (offer cheaper accommodations, etc.)
  + Provide reciprocal (half rate?) memberships for partner organizations

*What organizations should AFS focus on for recruitment?*

* Federal, state, tribal, local governments – leadership needs to be members and support the professional involvement of their employees
* Angling groups: TU, IFFF, BASS
* ASIH, ABS, ESA, Waterbirds Society, Society for Freshwater Sciences, ASLO, Conservation Biology, SER, AGU, World Aquaculture Society
* Environmental consulting firms, NGOs

**Regular members** (1105 comment responses)

*What membership benefits provide the most value to you?*

* Chapter and national conferences
  + Networking with colleagues
  + “recharge” on issues
* Publications
  + Online access to journals and resources
  + Guidelines and handbooks
  + Book discounts
  + *Fisheries*
* Job board
* Professional development
  + Professional certifications
  + Continuing education
  + Hutton Fellowship
* Advocacy and outreach
  + Professional “voice” for fisheries
  + Policies
* Opportunity for involvement/leadership
* Professional directory

*What value do AFS sections add to your membership?*

* Specialized network
  + Newsletters
  + Email updates
  + “the only reason I belong to AFS”
* Develop AFS position statements
* Valued sections: Fish Health, Introduced Fish, Larval Fish, Fisheries Management, Fish Culture, CARS, BES, Marine Fish
* No involvement/no benefit
  + Many are not very active

*What value do AFS chapters add to your membership?*

* Meetings are an opportunity for local networking, mentoring, recruiting opportunities, and friendships
  + “Not alternative to national meetings”
  + “Available at a reasonable cost”
* Newsletters
* Continuing education
* Political advocacy

*What can AFS do to recruit and retain regular members?*

* Website improvement
  + Include a blog or forum for member questions
  + Make renewal easier; send reminders
  + Add webinar capabilities to allow remote attendance at national meetings
* Advocacy
  + Lobby agencies to require certification for employment
  + Increased activism on political issues (climate change, industrial impacts, habitat protection, restoration) for benefits to fish and fisheries
  + “Some resolutions in chapters and at the national level degrades the impartial professionalism shown by many members in federal agencies to the point where they drop out of AFS”
  + “Decrease advocacy and focus on real world needs of most fisheries workers – what is AFS doing to help increase salaries and prestige of fisheries professionals?”
  + “There's our official position that only evolution-based science education is valid. AFS has no business taking sides in faith-based issues (yes, macro-evolution is just as faith-based as any other explanation). Just stay out of such issues, AFS--it's not your place! I've got one foot out the door over that one--be careful AFS!”
  + “AFS should be a voice supporting both positive actions that benefit our fisheries (e.g., supporting dam removal and instream flows), and a critic of poor policy and environmental damage (e.g., oil spill impacts, mining impacts, and antiquated laws such as mining laws, water rights, etc.). Preparing policy papers for legislators at federal and state levels to address resource issues. Not that AFS should become a vocal environmental organization, but some advocacy for sound policy would be beneficial for fisheries resources.”
  + “Wholly support wild fisheries. Hatchery support is a big turnoff.”
* Advertise more/better
  + Target students, young professionals, and international professionals
  + Demonstrate the value of membership:
    - To agency administrators (how can AFS membership benefit the agency?)
    - To potential members by showing the translation to jobs/additional compensation
    - To non-traditional professionals (beyond the “hook and bullet” crowd) including aquaculture
  + Feature a fisheries biologist in *Fisheries* – good exposure
* Revised membership fee structure
  + Quarterly payment of dues so it is a smaller amount
  + Incentive for continued membership (e.g., 10 years of consecutive membership can be applied to lifetime membership)
  + Consider “family memberships”
  + Tiered membership based on salary
  + Incentives for cheaper membership (sign up a colleague, get a discount; maintain membership for 3 years and attend two meetings, get a free year)
  + Membership cost decrease with longevity of membership or with society involvement
* Provide “members only” benefits
  + Identify career opportunities
  + Add awards only available to long standing members or “Distinguished” members
  + Facilitate internships or “job swaps”
  + Free access to at least one online journal or a number of “free” downloads a month
  + Mentoring opportunities
  + Target young professionals for travel awards, etc. – many benefits for students but almost NONE once they graduate
  + Continuing education opportunities (in person and remote)
  + Award members pins for every 10 years of membership
* Overhaul professional certification to make it more relevant to career advancement
  + Work with agencies to update and use certification for selecting candidates

*What organizations should AFS focus on for recruitment?*

* Federal, state, tribal, local governments – leadership needs to be members and support the professional involvement of their employees
* Students and young professionals – bring them into the “family” early!
* Chapter mailing lists
* AAFV, AVMA, AFWA, ASIH, AES, TNC, ESA, NABS, NALMS, ICES, TU
* Multi-disciplinary water resource organizations
* Aquaculture, National Aquaculture Association, recreational industries
* Boy scouts, high schools
* Outdoor equipment retailers, aquarium industries
* Private industry and consulting companies