

Forming a Chapter or Subchapter

Chapters and subchapters are the smallest geographically based subunits of the American Fisheries Society. They are formed because of mutual interests in local problems, projects, and accomplishments involving fisheries professionals. Generally, Chapters and associated Subchapters provide for interaction among professionals and students within restricted areas, such as individual states or provinces, contiguous states or provinces, universities, or areas united by common interest. As subunits of Divisions, Chapter and their Subchapter boundaries may not cross Division lines. Chapters serve as lines of communication from the local level to the Division and the National level and can increase the membership, and thus the strength of the Society.

The following procedures may be used as a guide in the formation of a Chapter or Subchapter, according to Constitution Article V.1.A.ii and V.2:

1. Poll groups and individuals who might have an interest in a local AFS Chapter or Subchapter (both AFS members and non-members). Some suggested questions include:

- Are you interested in the formation of a Chapter or a Subchapter of the American Fisheries Society?
- How often, when, and where should meetings be held?
- What type of program should be incorporated with the meetings?
- Would you participate in the activities of the Chapter or Subchapter and, if so, be willing to serve as an officer or committee member?

2. If the poll indicates sufficient interest, then an organizational meeting should be held to determine objectives and to implement the following preliminary procedures:

- Elect temporary officers (see enclosed sample bylaws);
- Draw up a petition defining the purpose and geographic boundaries of the proposed Chapter, and obtain signatures of at least 25 active AFS members (see enclosed sample petition). This petition should then be submitted to the Division President (for a Chapter) or Chapter President (for a Subchapter), since the Division or Chapter Officers must approve the petition, respectively, before proceeding further.

Bylaws should be written using the enclosed sample bylaws as a guide.

After receiving approval of the petition from the Division President, the petition, slate of officers, and bylaws should be submitted to the Executive Director. The petition signatures will be verified for active membership and the bylaws sent to the AFS Constitutional Consultant for verification of conformity with the Society's Constitution, Bylaws, and Rules. Upon receiving the approval of the Constitutional Consultant and verification of the required number of signatures, the bylaws would then be presented by the Constitutional Consultant to the AFS Governing Board for approval at its next meeting (e.g., semi-annual in March or annual in August). The final step would be notification in writing by the Executive Director that the petition, bylaws, and slate of officers had been approved.

Suggested purposes and responsibilities of Chapters are as follows:

1. Facilitate communication among members regarding the conduct of the fisheries profession in the chapter's region.
2. Hold meetings, publish works, and perform other activities on a technical and semi-technical level that advance the status and performance of the fisheries profession in the chapter's region.
3. Determine the views of members relative to professional topics affecting their performance by conducting surveys and considering resolutions.
4. Present the views of chapter members to the Division membership, the national membership, and to the general public and governmental agencies of the chapter's region.
5. Hold annual meetings at which all bylaw responsibilities are carried out.
6. Serve as technical and professional advisors to governmental agencies within the chapter's region.
7. Promote the fisheries profession within the chapter's region through active and positive relations with journalists, governmental officials, special interest groups, other professional organizations, and the general public.
8. Promote the wise use of aquatic resources by initiating and participating in special projects that increase public awareness, expand participation, improve habitat, and protect fragile resources.
9. Represent the policies and positions of the full American Fisheries Society in aquatic resource discussions and controversies within your geographic boundaries.

Some of the above information and other details pertinent to chapters are to be found in the AFS Constitution and Rules on the Society website.

A final important admonition for Chapter officers is to state the importance of reporting all activities, meetings, changes in leadership, and other business to the Division President, as well as the Executive Director of the Society. This chain of communication is necessary to maintain Society unity.

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