



Presidential Plan of Work by Draft Strategic Plan Categories Gary E. Whelan 2025-26

Introduction

Each Society President has the responsibility to develop and implement a Plan of Work (POW) that is based on known Society needs, interests of the President, and the approved Society Strategic Plan that is in force during the Presidency. It is important to recognize that Presidential terms are only 1 year so the scope of action is limited and only a few items will be the direct focus of the President. The rest of the POW requires the assistance of American Fisheries Society (Society) staff, other officers, and members to make progress. Given this short timeframe, the President in office should also be laying the groundwork for future Society officers' POWs as part of their POWs to help ensure their success. The ideas for POWs are broadly vetted by the other Society officers and several of the work items were generated directly from their input which was most appreciated.

My POW follows these tenets. My focus will be on the advancement of fisheries science and conservation with an emphasis on fisheries habitat, development and engagement of our professional fisheries community, improvement of our members skills, and improvement in the Society's ability to affect policy. I will be asking many members, sections, committees, and staff members to assist me in carrying out this POW, mostly by providing recommended actions for the Society's Governing Board and Management Committee analysis and approval or implementing already approved actions. My hope is that this broadens our Society's perspectives and increases engagement by our members.

President's POWs are also required to follow the approved Society Strategic Plan. This plan follows the objectives of the new Strategic Plan along with specified KPIs. Additional KPIs will be added to improve assessment of the POW's implementation.

Proposed Plan of Work for 2025-2026

- Draft Strategic Plan Objective 1 - Promote fisheries conservation with science-based research, aquaculture practices, and effective resource management.
 - Oversee Annual AFS meeting in Columbus, OH in 2026 and ensure its success (KPI 1.2)
 - Develop theme and focus on Fisheries and Aquatic Habitat
 - Celebrate the National Fish Habitat Partnership's 20th anniversary include at minimum 1 plenary talk on subject
 - Request habitat related symposia from all Sections
 - Work with the Instream Flow Council to have an instream flow and water level symposium

- Secondary theme will be the fisheries resources and resource history of the State of Ohio and vicinity
 - Potentially have Lake Erie and Ohio River Symposia
 - Include plenary talks on Lake Erie fisheries history and Lake Erie phosphorus control efforts at this time. If time permits, add additional talk on Ohio fisheries and ecological history.
 - Ensure that all meeting committees are staffed with volunteers and have their charges and assignments prior to the San Antonio meeting.
 - Ensure that the Columbus Ohio meeting has a staffed booth at the San Antonio meeting and meeting committee members attend the 2025 Meeting to learn best practices.
- Develop and implement new approaches to address key fisheries policy issues across the geographic range of members (KPI 1.1)
 - Reinvigorate the Resource Policy Committee to assist the Society in developing key resource policy statements to include the U.S. Farm Bill and on the importance of U.S. fisheries science programs.
 - Evaluate the opportunity then develop and implement an MOU with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) to mutually support key resource policy issues to both entities with the assistance of other AFS Officers and Executive Director.
 - Assist Executive Director (ED) in seeking out other opportunities with other conservation organizations that have similar interests to mutually support key resource policy issues.
 - Request the Resource Policy and Science Communication Committees to provide recommendations and actions to advance the Society's efforts on climate adaptation.
- Continue to develop and implement communication bridges to resource agencies and other employer leadership concerning the importance of being a Society member and the benefits it brings to their workplace (KPI 1.1)
 - Have officers, other AFS leadership, and the ED annually attend and when possible, have a booth at AFWA and regional fish and wildlife agency meetings which represent public employers.
 - Request the Membership Committee look for similar opportunities with other types of employers and provide recommendations to the President and ED.
- Continue existing and develop new relationships with professional societies and organizations that have overlapping interests (KPI 1.1)
 - Continue work to further develop CASS into a stronger entity for its members by assisting other AFS Officers in their efforts. Request the President-Elect to oversee this effort for the Society.
 - Work with the ED to continue to develop relationships with AFWA and regional fish and wildlife associations that represent upper leadership of conservation organizations.
 - Request the appropriate Society staff and committees to examine opportunities to develop relationships with the Native American Fish and Wildlife Society, National Military Fish and Wildlife Association, and other international fisheries societies and provide recommendations and actions to the President and ED.
 - Continue to implement exchange opportunities with other international fisheries societies and CASS member organizations.

- Continue to assist other AFS Officers with the development of JASM2028. Request the First Vice President and President-Elect to be engaged in the planning of this key meeting.
 - At minimum, attend Society of Canadian Aquatic Sciences, Australian Society for Fish Biology, and Fisheries Society of the British Isles and determine if opportunities are available to attend the Japanese Society of Fisheries Science.
 - Ensure that Society governance and other affected members are aware of what our liaisons to other societies are learning and what key information needs to be exchanged further in the Society.
 - Organize one or more townhalls with all liaisons in the early fall and late spring to allow for the exchange of ideas between liaisons and develop a better understanding of the challenges they are facing and information they are gathering to improve the Society. Request the assistance of the First Vice President in organizing this task.
 - Request each Society Liaison to other societies to provide short written activity reports for the Mid-Term Governing Board and Annual Meeting Governing Board Meeting using a set reporting format. Request the assistance of the First Vice President in organizing this task.
 - Request the Names of Fishes Committee, Fisheries Administration Section, and Fisheries Management Committee to jointly develop a draft process for making changes to future Names of Fishes Books to include initial consultation on name changes between these three groups, supporting documentation and evidence standards, and appealing naming issues.
 - Request the Names of Fishes Committee, Fisheries Administration Section, and Fisheries Management Committee to jointly provide recommendations on how to deal with known issues in the 2023 Special Publication 37.
 - Request the First Vice President and President Elect to assist in this task.
- Draft Strategic Plan Objective 2 - Provide effective governance at all levels of AFS.
 - Assist Executive Director with duties and help ensure his success (KPI 2.2, 2.5)
 - Assist ED with review and analysis of issues with the Society budget and publication contract and ensure a clear role for the Financial Planning and Procedures Committee in this area.
 - Assist the ED with Society operation and review his performance.
 - Ensure that progress is made with the Society's program review process and reports are completed by the established deadline. Ensure that all Society programs have a clear why, a goal, and implementation strategy for the 2025-26 period.
 - Continue to improve the Society's membership position (KPI 2.3) with a long-term goal of 10,000 members by 2030
 - Assist in implementing the Membership Committee's plan as approved by the Governing Board, request a set of measurable recommendations and actions from the Membership Committee, and ensure measurable progress is being made.
 - Ensure that all fisheries professionals can enjoy, fully participate, and use the many benefits of the Society by starting the process for the President-Elect's key objective to convert affiliate memberships to full Society members in all Society units.
 - Begin process to require Society membership for any fisheries professional who wants to participate in the Society at any level.

- Request ED, appropriate Society staff and committees to develop recommendations on new funding methods to assist members with financial constraints be full members.
 - Focus Society efforts on building a stronger relationship with international members, in particular our Canadian members and request that Canadian Aquatic Resources Section (CARS) develop a set of recommendation and actions for Society action in this area.
 - Prepare additional groundwork for First Vice President’s objective to improve the Society’s standing for European, Southeast Asian, Australian fisheries professionals including exploring the development of “international ELMA” positions. Request the assistance of the First Vice President in these efforts.
 - Ensure that communications between Society leadership and members are open and concise (KPI 2.1, 2.3, 2.4)
 - Continue practice of Society officers visiting every chapter on a regular 3-4 year basis and every Division annually
 - Make every effort to ensure Society officers are available and present for all non-Annual meeting Section meetings.
 - Request that the Society ED and staff be available for as many meetings as fiscally possible and as time allows.
 - Examine communication options with the Executive Director, Communication Committee and other appropriate committees, and select and implement best ones to keep Society members informed and engaged.
 - Ensure that the Society’s website and social media feeds continue to improve and request the Data and Technology Section and Electronic Services Advisory Board to review work and provide recommendations on how to improve these areas.
 - Ensure that communications from the Society Officers and leadership is clear and concise
 - Continue with monthly Officer meetings
 - Develop and continually revise messaging bullets and presentations to membership
 - Work with the ED to ensure that AFS town halls and AFS leadership sessions continue at regularly scheduled intervals
 - Request the Strategic Positioning Committee develop recommendations on how to develop a culture of simple, clear and concise exchanges of informal within the Society and outside.
 - Request the development of a draft long-term vision for the Society by the Strategic Positioning Committee
- Draft Strategic Plan Objective 3 - Foster a supportive and welcoming environment within AFS to broaden participation and enhance representation among fisheries professionals.
 - Develop and implement new communities to engage members (KPI 3.2, 4.1, and 4.2)
 - Develop and implement a “Corps of Experience” using a special committee
 - Look for retirees that are willing to assist current members with tasks/issues and provide mentors.
 - Develop ways to engage retirees with other retirees and with current members such as the Fishing Buddies Program and pairing up retirees with Chapters and Student Subunits.
 - Develop and Implement Fisheries Friend and Fishing Buddies Programs using a special committee

- Provide new opportunities for members to meet and engage with other members while traveling.
 - Resolve legal liability issues to allow AFS involvement.
 - Ensuring a broad-based community of practice (KPI 3.1, 3.2)
 - Continue efforts of previous Presidents to ensure that the Society is diverse, inclusive and accepting of all current and potential members requesting specific recommendations and actions from the FishCast and the EOS.
 - Facilitate the First Vice President's efforts to develop a Fisheries Leadership Academy Corps with the goal of further developing young leaders that want to bring new principles, including Extreme Ownership Principles, to lead at all levels in AFS.
 - Request a review of all procedures for processing professional conduct issues by the Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee and have them revised based on recent experiences. If none exist, request procedures be developed.
- Draft Strategic Plan Objective 4 - Provide professional development opportunities to members.
 - Improving member skills and maintaining engagement (KPI 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3)
 - Request the development of an updated Professional Development and Certification Program from the Professional Development Committee and the Board of Professional Certification
 - Continue directed member engagement and education by officers and ED including Fishy Fridays, Leaderline, Mindset Mondays, and similar efforts. Increase the distribution of these products to as many members as possible, perhaps through an opt-out process.
 - Fully implement a bi-weekly webinar series with contributions from all Sections.
 - Request each Section develop 2 webinars to provide insights and information to members to start in September 2025
 - Request the best positioned Society committee or section to develop a short survey by employer type (Federal, State, Tribal, Provincial, Private, NGO, and Local) on top three items they would like the Society to provide their employees. This would be sent out in Winter 2025 with implementation of ideas in Fall and Winter 2026.
 - Develop and implement better approaches to engage the current community of Society award recipients
 - Continue engagement with Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame to provide another avenue of public recognition for members that can be turned over to the Award Committee for future implementation.
 - Request recommendations and actions from the Award and Past Presidents' Committee to improve Society award portfolio and shorten awards ceremonies while ensuring members get the appropriate recognition. Request the First Vice-President to oversee this effort.