

AFS President's Plan of Work
April N. Croxton
August 2022-August 2023

During my tenure as AFS President, my goals are to lead the Society in activities that support our mission **to improve the conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting the development of fisheries professionals**. As with previous Presidential plans, I intend to align my proposed plan of work focal areas with the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan (Bowker et al. 2019), as well as previous AFS leadership initiatives. To this end, I have identified four high-priority areas of focus for my term as President of AFS:

1. *Further promote robust internal communications at all Society levels.*
2. *Continue advancing diversity and inclusion efforts within the Society and fisheries profession through sustainable targeted programs and outreach activities.*
3. *Support the AFS 2023 Grand Rapids Annual Meeting and Latin American and Caribbean Fisheries Congress.*
4. *Initiate planning efforts for the selection of the next AFS Executive Director.*

These focus areas are closely aligned to the objectives identified in the 2020-2024 Strategic Plan (Bowker et al. 2019), which was revised to provide a forward-focused vision for the Society. The specific objectives found in this AFS planning document are as follows:

Objective 1: Advance fisheries disciplines, conservations, and management.

Objective 2: Develop Fisheries Professionals.

Objective 3: Communicate the importance of both the science and the value of fisheries discipline.

Objective 4: Increase diversity among fisheries professionals and promote an inclusive environment in AFS.

Objective 5: Provide effective governance of AFS and high-quality service to AFS's members.

The proposed actions associated with each of my areas of focus are intended to further strengthen and enhance current AFS initiatives, and to increase the efficiency of the Society's internal processes. The success of these actions will depend on strong partnerships between AFS leadership, staff, Units, and membership.

Plan Objectives and Rationale

1. *Further promote robust internal communication at all Society levels.*

Over the past few years, AFS has made considerable efforts in rebuilding the public trust in science and the experts that manage and/or conduct the science, as well as the development of targeted science communication initiatives for fisheries professionals. These efforts include the Society's role in the development of a climate statement and the Climate Ambassadors Program. While external communication is necessary to the success of the Society and the fisheries profession, internal communication within the Society is equally important. Recent Governing Board discussions have identified several areas of improvement in how we disseminate information within the Society. My goal for this focus area is to work with the Governing Board, Communication Committee, AFS staff, and membership to **develop a communication mechanism where information flows efficiently, effectively, and proactively within the Society.** This mechanism will ensure that all Society members are well-informed of the activities taking place, as well as identifying and preventing duplicating efforts.

Actions proposed:

1. Identify current gaps in internal communication efforts through membership surveys or inquiries to Units and AFS staff.
2. Re-evaluate the previous communication strategy to ensure that it is relevant, flexible, and continues to promote forward-thinking approaches to sharing information within the Society.
3. Continue to support and promote AFS Policy efforts through targeted Unit engagement.

AFS Strategic Objective(s): 3, 5

Suggested Unit Participation: AFS Staff, Communications Committee, Membership Committee, Science Communication Section

2. *Continue advancing diversity and inclusion efforts within the Society and fisheries profession through sustainable targeted programs and outreach activities.*

AFS continues to shine as a leader in Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA) initiatives among professional societies. These efforts have contributed to ensuring that diverse perspectives and experiences continue to strengthen our presence in the fisheries community. However, it is crucial that these DEIA initiatives are sustainable in order to gain their true value to the Society and profession. The goal of this focus area is to move towards having **a Society with sustainable diverse, equitable, inclusive, and accessible programming that promotes a welcoming environment to ALL members, and potential members.** To be clear, this focus area is not intended to develop a suite of new DEIA

programs, but rather to continue to support and advance the efforts that AFS is already engaging in by developing internal processes that will promote long-term benefits to the Society and profession.

Actions proposed:

1. Continue supporting and promoting established programs and initiatives (Hutton, Diversity Joint Venture, and Consortium of Aquatic Science Societies) within the Society.
2. Develop sustainable targeted outreach to Historically Black Colleges and University, Tribal Colleges and University, and Hispanic Serving Institute students and early career professionals, by developing targeted working groups with Units.
3. Develop a DEIA Strategy and Implementation Plan.
4. Seek opportunities to partner with other organization on DEIA initiatives.

AFS Strategic Objective(s): 2, 4

Suggested Unit Participation: AFS Staff, Hutton Scholars Committee, CASS, D&I Standing Committee, Membership Committee, Equal Opportunities Section, Education Section, Student and Early Career Professionals Subsection

3. Support the 2023 Grand Rapids Annual Meeting and the Latin American and Caribbean Fisheries Congress.

For the 2023 Annual meeting being held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, I hope to provide a venue where fisheries professions can share their work and learn from other fisheries professionals. The theme for this meeting is *“Adaptive approaches to understand and manage changes in fisheries”*, which will highlight how fisheries professionals are creatively using tools or approaches to understand changes across the fisheries field. As President, I will also work to support the Society’s leadership role and participation in the Latin American and Caribbean Fisheries Congress, convening in 2023. My goal for this focus area is to **host successful meetings that will help to communicate fisheries science to large audiences, and to attract new members.**

Actions proposed:

1. Lead planning efforts for the 2023 AFS Annual meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan (August 20-24), by partnering with the Michigan Chapter, North Central Division, and other Units to create a successful scientific meeting.
2. To support AFS efforts in hosting the Latin American and Caribbean Fisheries Congress in Cancun, Mexico (May 15-18, 2023).

AFS Strategic Objective(s): 3, 4

Suggested Unit Participation: AFS Staff, all Units, Membership Committee

4. Initiate planning efforts for the selection of the next AFS Executive Director.

The role of an Executive Director is crucial to the continued success of the Society’s internal functions and contributions to the fisheries profession. The current AFS Executive Director, Doug Austen, will be retiring soon and the Society will need to plan for this departure and select a successor. As President, I will have the responsibility of facilitating the initial stages of the selection process for the new AFS Executive Director. My goal for this focus area is to **initiate an Executive Director succession planning strategy that will result in the selection of a qualified candidate.**

Actions Proposed:

1. In partnership with AFS Leadership, staff, and membership, engage former Executive Director selection committee members and obtain feedback on previously used selection processes.
2. Establish a process and timeline for the selection of the next AFS Executive Director.
3. Identify members of the Executive Director Selection Committee.

AFS Strategic Objective(s): 5

Suggested Unit Participation: AFS Staff and AFS members

Reference:

Bowker, J., T. Bigford, S. Bonar, J. Defilippi-Simpson, R. Essig, J. Jackson, S. Midway, and M. Murphy. Charting the course for the American Fisheries Society: Strategic Plan for 2020-2024. Fisheries 44(3):119-122.