



# American Fisheries Society Unit Leaders Guide

January 2017



## Preface

Congratulations! You're an active AFS member involved in Unit leadership! Serving as a Unit officer or in another leadership role can be immensely satisfying and a fulfilling part of your ongoing development as a fisheries professional. That said, Unit leadership can also be intimidating. Confidence, in any arena,



comes from being able to predict the likely outcome. We lack confidence when we don't know what the result of our involvement will be...and we often assume the worst! The more you prepare and the more you do something, the more you can be sure of the outcome. There are a number of ways you can gather the knowledge and experience to be an effective Unit leader. A great way to learn about leadership is to participate in Leading at All Levels, a continuing education offered free-of-charge at every AFS annual meeting and periodically in other venues. The

Emerging Leader Mentorship Program is another way for selected AFS members to gain additional experience and exposure to the inner workings of Society business and governance. Naturally, most Unit leaders learn from their predecessors, and this is especially true of officers in a succession path, moving from vice-president to president-elect to president. Society and Unit bylaws and procedures are also essential resources for becoming familiar with the structure and function of AFS and its Units. This Unit Guide is meant to be a supplement to these other means of increasing your confidence and competence as a Unit leader. If you're just getting started with AFS, use this as a 'how-to' guide to the basics of leadership, keeping your Unit well-organized, and resources available via the AFS headquarters office. Nothing can take the place of experience, but this guide is intended to help you address immediate questions about Unit leadership and set a course to becoming an effective leader.



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# American Fisheries Society

# Unit Leaders Guide

## February 2017

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## Types of Units and Formation

### What is an AFS Unit?

Units are subgroups of AFS members who share common interests, either because of geographic location, institutional affiliation, involvement in specific fisheries disciplines, etc. AFS Units include Divisions, Chapters, Sections, and Student Subunits. Units are authorized by the Society's Governing Board if the Unit seems likely to provide a worthwhile and long-term service to the Society. Units differ from Society committees in that they aren't charged annually with specific tasks related to Society business and membership is determined by an individual's professional interest, location of residence (in the case of Divisions) or choice to join, not appointment.

### Divisions

Divisions are geographically defined Units intended to advance the Society's objectives over broad regions. The purpose of Division Units is to facilitate communication among members in that geographic region, promote technical communications relevant to that geographic region, and represent that geographic region's members in interactions with AFS and the public. Each Division also contains many Chapters and Student Subunits. When you become a member of AFS, you are automatically



placed in a Division based on your geographic location of residence. Note that members can request inclusion in other Divisions by corresponding with the AFS Executive Director, but this request is largely an issue for international members living outside North America and the defined Divisional boundaries. Divisions typically host at least one meeting annually, sometimes in conjunction with other meetings such as the AFS Annual Meeting, Southeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies

Annual Meeting, or Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference.

A current list of Divisions and their boundaries is located at <http://fisheries.org/about/Units/divisions>.

### Chapters and Student Subunits

Chapters are geographically defined Units intended to advance the Society's objectives over more localized areas than Divisions. Chapters bring local fisheries scientists together to facilitate communication at a lower geographic level. Chapter membership is extremely valuable in bringing together fisheries professionals from the same state, province or other geographic region within a Division. Chapters typically host one meeting annually, and these meetings convey information directly relevant to attendees because of the localized nature of the Chapter.

Student Subunits are defined by academic institutions and are maintained under the auspices of Chapters. They are intended to advance the Society’s objectives through involvement of student members at the level of colleges and universities.

A current list of Chapters and their Student Subunits is located at <http://fisheries.org/about/Units/chapters/>.

### Sections

Sections are Units defined by professional interests, and are intended to advance the Society’s objectives within the various disciplines of fisheries science and practice. Sections also serve to bring together common expertise from a variety of areas of interest, not all of which may be fisheries-related (e.g., needs and interests in genetics, technology, education, etc., are largely common throughout natural resources and other fields of science). Unlike other Units, Sections have no geographic or institutional boundaries. Some Sections host or co-host their own meetings, independent of AFS meetings, but most conduct their business in conjunction with the AFS Annual Meeting.

A current list of Sections is located at <http://fisheries.org/about/Units/sections/>.

### Committees

The Society and its Units have various standing and special committees that are responsible for conducting much of the Society’s business. See [Unit Committees and Volunteers](#) for more information about committees and how they function. Also, the list of Society-level standing and special committees (<http://fisheries.org/about/committees/>) may be a useful source of expertise and ideas for Unit leaders.

## Reporting Requirements

### Change of Officer Report

Following each AFS Annual Meeting, Unit leaders (typically the immediate past-president) are sent a Change of Officer Report form to be completed and returned to the AFS headquarters office. This form advises headquarters staff of any changes in leadership that have occurred for the Unit, and allow for the AFS website and other contact and distribution lists to be updated. Completing this form is essential to ensure accurate and timely communications between the Society, Unit leaders, and the membership at large.



To download the form or for instructions regarding submission, see <http://fisheries.org/about/Units/guidelines/change-of-officer-report/>

## Tax Filing Responsibilities

Most organizations exempt from income tax must file an annual information return (Form 990 or 990-EZ) or submit an annual electronic notice (Form 990-N), depending upon the organization's gross receipts and total assets. Form 990 is an annual information return required to be filed with the IRS by organizations exempt from income tax under section 501(a), and certain other entities. Form 990 reports certain gross income, receipts and disbursements activities along with other information about the organization. This Form is available to the public, and how the public perceives an organization can be determined by information included on the Form.

Filing requirements, including instructions on how and where to file, can be found on the IRS website (referenced using the following link):

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/annual-electronic-filing-requirement-for-small-exempt-organizations-form-990-n-e-postcard>

Organizations with gross receipts normally \$50,000 or less will file electronically using Form 990-N on or before May 15, for calendar year end entities. Most AFS Units fall in this category and will file using Form 990-N. There is no penalty for late filing but (and it's a big one)-- organizations failing to file for three consecutive years will automatically lose their tax exempt status and will have to apply and pay for reinstatement separately from AFS.

Units are solely responsible for filing all tax forms with the IRS/Federal and State agencies. Often this responsibility falls to the treasurer or secretary/treasurer, but each Unit should establish procedures for ensuring officers are aware of filing deadlines and the Unit's documentation is submitted. See [Financial Management](#) section below for additional details regarding tax-related requirements. Additional information may be found at <http://fisheries.org/about/Units/guidelines/tax-filing-responsibilities/>

## Preparing Midyear/Annual Reports to the AFS Governing Board

Reporting is an essential element of transparent and effective governance. For non-profit organizations like AFS, reporting is also important for compliance purposes and maintaining tax-exempt status. Finally, reporting is the means by which we gather quantitative information regarding Society and Unit activities to understand our past successes, guide future efforts, and help others to recognize the value of membership and supporting AFS. Preparing reports for the Governing Board does take time, but it is well worth the investment to prepare thorough and accurate reports. As fisheries professionals, we appreciate the value of reliable data and science-based management. If reports are not reliable representations of your Unit's activity, they will not help future Unit leaders to better execute the Society's strategic plan and further the AFS vision. Reports to the Governing Board are typically compiled and submitted by the Unit president, with input and review by the other officers, committee chairs, etc. The precise format of reports to the Governing Board may change from time to time, but they will generally entail:



### *Motion Report*

Recommended Motion: A brief statement (usually 1-2 sentences) summarizing the recommended course of action or decision. This is what voting members will vote for or against.

Minority View: A summary of any dissenting views or alternatives to the recommended motion.

Background for Motion: This is where additional information is provided so that voting members understand the context of the motion and can make informed decisions regarding their vote.

### *Activity Report*

Charge or Annual Program of Work: Committees will typically be charged with specific duties or responsibilities, whereas other Units will derive this information from their Bylaws or president's plan of work.

Annual Financial Report: a summary of your Unit's financial activity during the reporting period (e.g., income, expenses, and account standing)

Summary of Outcomes and Accomplishments: This is a quantitative reporting of Unit activities as they relate to the AFS Strategic Plan.

Some may feel that this reporting template is restrictive in that it does not allow for detailed reporting of your Unit's activities. Understand that the overtly quantitative nature of this template is by design. Descriptive narrative reports are nearly impossible to translate to quantitative measures of Society and Unit activity, especially considering the number of AFS Units involved. Detailed descriptions of Unit activity may be important for your Unit (e.g., names of award winners, titles of symposia, themes of meetings), but that type of information is best captured in the minutes of Unit meetings. Reports to the Governing Board should strive for brevity and focus on the quantitative aspects of your Unit's activities that are most relevant to the Society at large.



## Conducting Unit Business

### Holding an Election

Electing officers will determine, in many ways, the near-term future of your Unit. A successful election depends on the nomination of candidates who exhibit the desired leadership qualities, vision, and willingness to commit the time to serve, as well as the more practical matters of balloting and voting procedures. Unit bylaws/procedures typically stipulate some aspects of holding an election (e.g., when elections are to be held, the number of candidates which must stand for each office, the number of

votes which must be cast in order for the election to be valid). For issues not addressed by the Unit bylaws, defer to the AFS Constitution, Rules, and Procedures.

Before accepting a nomination, candidates should be reminded that they should communicate with their employers regarding their nomination. For many fisheries professionals, serving as a Society or Unit officer requires certain declarations and administrative approvals— a particularly important consideration for federal and state/provincial agency employees. Anyone considering serving as a Society or Unit officer should discuss the matter with their employer and, if possible try to serve in an official capacity; it will allow an individual to conduct AFS business during normal working hours and using some employer resources (e.g., email, telephone). If an individual will not be serving in an official capacity, they may need to correspond using personal telecommunications accounts. The employee may need to establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between their employer and the Society to address ethics requirements or other considerations. An example MOU may be found in the Procedures manual (see here for details, <http://fisheries.org/about/governance/procedures/society-officers/#mou>)

The Society and most Units now vote electronically, which is usually easier and faster than paper balloting and typically encourages greater participation. ‘E-voting’ presents a number of potential issues



that should be considered prior to holding an election. First, do your bylaws permit electronic voting? If not, discuss the process for incorporating electronic voting measures with the AFS Constitutional Consultant. The AFS Procedures related to electronic voting offer useful guidance regarding conducting electronic voting. Second, consider what electronic balloting/polling system will be used. Survey Monkey is a commonly used tool that can be accessed via AFS headquarters office at no-cost, but others may also be appropriate. Regardless of the tool selected, ensure that the settings are properly configured to prevent non-members from accessing to the poll, duplicate balloting, etc. Although detailed reporting on the fate of motions is routine and appropriate (i.e., how many people voted in favor, voted against, or abstained), consider additional privacy regarding the outcome of elections. Election results will be validated according to Unit bylaws or procedures, as appropriate, to ensure

accuracy of the results; publically reporting the number of votes cast for each candidate offers little in terms of validation, but can be damaging to the candidates; for these reasons, it’s recommended that the ballot counts not be disseminated.

After the election is over, the results need to be shared with the membership and AFS headquarters office. Most AFS Sections and Divisions hold elections such that newly elected individuals take office in conjunction with the AFS annual meeting (usually August or September) and the changing of Society officers. Other Units, including many Chapters, change officers at their annual meeting, which may follow a different timeline. Regardless of the timing, be sure to complete a Change of Officer form (see

appendix) and submit to AFS headquarters office within 30 days of a change in officers. Chapters should also submit a copy of this form to their Division leadership (Chapter presidents are on the Division Executive Committee).

### Society Operational Guidelines

For additional information about Society governance and procedures, see the AFS governance webpage for the AFS mission, strategic plan, and other informative documents. Note especially the procedures (<http://fisheries.org/about/governance/procedures/>) and rules and constitution (<http://fisheries.org/about/governance/constitution-and-rules/>). At the latter link, AFS provides special rules for different types of AFS Units.

### Interacting with Your Membership

How a Unit interacts with its members may vary, based on the type of Unit. For example, Divisions and Chapters typically hold annual meetings that are separate from the Society's annual meeting; most Sections convene their annual business meeting in conjunction with the annual Society meeting. Many Sections coordinate collaborative activities with non-AFS organizations with similar interests (e.g., the Fish Culture Section co-sponsors annual meetings with the U.S. Aquaculture Society and National Shellfisheries Association), whereas Chapters and Divisions work most often within the Society. That said, there is some commonality in how different Units attract and engage their members.



### Recruitment

Why should anyone be a member of the American Fisheries Society and/or your Unit? This question is one all Unit leaders should be able to answer convincingly in one or two sentences. Some of the membership benefits include discounted access to fisheries science journals and books, reduced meeting registration rates, academic and travel scholarships to attend annual Unit meetings, other award opportunities, potential page charge waivers for publishing in AFS journals, networking, professional development opportunities, and continuing education courses (see here for details: <http://fisheries.org/membership/>). Unit membership can provide additional benefits, allowing a member to engage with fisheries professionals their geographic region or with those who have similar interests, access to additional award and grant opportunities, and newsletters or other communications related to fisheries science in their region or discipline. Because each Unit offers a suite of unique benefits and services to its members—be sure your leaders are informed and ready to communicate this value to current and prospective members. Additionally, Unit leaders need to be cognizant of members who want to step up and become more active. Failing to respond to or engage volunteers will leave

them disillusioned with your Unit and unwilling to offer their help again; furthermore, don't let those who are willing to give their time and talents go unused or unacknowledged. Unit leaders are encouraged to work with AFS headquarters office to identify members-at-large who have expressed an interest in volunteering via the Application for Committee Assignment (for Society-level committees): <http://fisheries.org/about/committees/application-for-committee-appointment/>.

### Understanding Membership Reports

All Unit presidents and secretaries/treasurers receive from AFS a Microsoft Excel-based report via email containing names and contacts for their Unit's members in good standing. Reports contain the following information: members' names and their membership type or status (e.g., general member or life member), address, email, fax, phone, paid through date, bad address code (used if mail/email is being returned), and last update (date when the address was updated). AFS members who paid their Unit dues directly to AFS will automatically be included in those monthly reports. AFS members who paid Unit dues directly to their Unit can be added to the monthly reports when their names are forwarded to AFS membership staff by Unit leaders. Affiliate (chapter only or section-only) membership details can be added to the monthly reports if Unit leaders forward the relevant information to the AFS Membership Coordinator.

## Financial Management

The main function of the financial officer for any organization is to track and safeguard the assets of the entity with which he or she is affiliated. For most AFS Units, financial management is largely the responsibility of the treasurer or secretary/treasurer, but financial decision-making and accountability also involve other Unit leaders, typically members of the Executive Committee. Below is a list of essential financial management duties and responsibilities for all Unit, typically handled by treasurers.

### Maintain the financial records of the Unit

It is the responsibility of the Unit treasurer to maintain accurate financial records and issue timely reports for the Unit. All AFS Units, particularly those falling under in the AFS Unit Group Tax Exemption, are encouraged to use the calendar year (January through December) as the fiscal year.

### Select a financial management system that supports transaction processing, reporting and record keeping

The Unit treasurer has the responsibility to develop and follow a system of financial management that supports the main function of the position. The cash method of accounting is acceptable as is the accrual method (which adheres to generally accepted accounting principles - GAAP), whereby income and expense items are recognized as they are earned or incurred, even though they may not yet have been received or actually paid in cash. There are many small accounting packages and online subscription-based systems which will track this information quite easily for the treasurer under either basis of accounting. Some Units use MS Excel effectively as well.

### Maintain a separate Unit checking account

It is very important that Units have an independent checking account for all Unit funds. These funds cannot be commingled with those of any other organization or person. The checking account must be in the name of the Unit and use the Unit's Employer Identification Number (EIN). Each Unit is a separate entity from the others, as well as from the AFS, and may not use any individual's, other Unit's, or organization's EIN. If you do not know your Unit EIN, contact the AFS headquarters office for the information. The AFS headquarters office will assist new Units in obtaining EINs as needed.

Ideally, all Unit checking accounts should require two signatures on checks; however, this practice may not always be feasible. If a Unit is unable to utilize two signatures, for whatever reason, another officer should always review and authorize payment of bills, especially if the dollar amount is above a certain threshold, say \$1,000. Some Units, due to the limited funds on hand, maintain just a savings account to avoid the monthly account fees. This approach is also acceptable, but the Unit should still follow the guidelines on signatures, account name, and EIN.

### Financial control procedures

The treasurer should also ensure that strong procedures and controls exist and are functioning within the Unit. These controls are not considered effectively implemented unless the procedures are understood and adopted by other officers of the Unit. Along these lines, another officer of the Unit should always review the monthly bank statement and its account reconciliation to insure no abnormalities, unreconciled items, unusual payees or amounts paid exist. Additionally, all Units are encouraged to prepare an annual budget defining expected income and expenses for the coming year. Financial records should also be routinely audited as defined by the Unit's bylaws or procedures; conducting audits on an annual basis is typical and recommended. As part of its fiduciary responsibilities, Unit officers should review monthly financial reports and question current year variances against budget and if applicable, variances from year-over-year.

### File all required tax returns

The Unit treasurer is responsible for filing all financial paperwork for the Unit. These filings may include the Federal form 990 series (visit [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) and download Publication 557, "Tax Exempt Status for Your Organization," for more information), state income tax returns (if required by the state), state sales and use tax returns (if the state has a sales and use tax and the Unit is registered with the state and has not received an exemption), personal property tax return (if applicable), and business licenses. Care should be taken to ensure that a copy of the return is retained in your Unit's permanent files. Units are separate entities and may not use another Unit's / organization's business registrations or licenses.

### How to file Form 990-N (e-Postcard)

Annual Form 990-N (e-Postcard) Filing: To ensure continued recognition of the Chapter's tax-exempt status, all AFS Units with annual gross receipts of \$50,000 or less are required to file Form 990-N each year by May 15th. Units with gross receipts above this threshold may file using Form 990 or Form 990-EZ. AFS recommends the Chapter treasurer file the Form 990-N. If it is not possible for the Chapter



treasurer to file, then the Chapter president should file. Information on where and how to file is available at <https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/annual-electronic-filing-requirement-for-small-exempt-organizations-form-990-n-e-postcard>.

The annual filing requires very basic information regarding the Unit and takes only a few minutes to complete. Important Note: Units that fail to file for three consecutive years will automatically lose their tax exempt status and must apply for reinstatement or a separate tax exemption at their own cost.

#### Make available a copy of the organization's application for federal income tax exemption

All tax-exempt organizations must make available for public inspection a copy of the organization's application for federal tax exemption, along with copies of any relevant documents sent to, or received from, the IRS. (IRS Notice 88-120). Inspection must be permitted during regular business hours at the organization's principal office, as well as any regional offices having at least three paid full-time employees. The organization is under no obligation to distribute a copy of the materials to a requester, but must either allow the requester to take notes freely or permit him or her to make copies. The organization may require a written request in order to provide copies, or it may choose to mail the information in lieu of an inspection. Some nonprofits publish Form 990 on the organization's website to address the administrative challenges for public inspection. Organizations like Guidestar privately collect and publish this information on their website.

#### Special tax considerations

In order for a Unit treasurer to be able to carry out these duties and responsibilities, he or she must be aware of the special characteristics of 501(c)(3) federal tax status organizations and how federal, state, and local laws relate to the operations and activities of AFS Units. It should be emphasized that all AFS Units are separate entities from AFS itself, as well as from each other, although most Units have been granted 501(c)(3) status through an IRS Unit Group Exemption under the parent organization of AFS.

#### 501(c) (3) status

AFS and its Units enjoy a special status as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable association. Not only are these organizations exempt from paying federal income tax on related business income (RBI), but there is a distinct advantage to donors and contributors to AFS and its Units in that both individuals and corporations can deduct their contributions as charitable donations, as long as certain guidelines are followed. As a 501(c)(3), AFS and its Units must also adhere to certain restrictions on its activities. The most important restriction prohibits 501(c)(3) organizations from engaging in direct or grassroots lobbying activities (local, state, or Federal). Any



lobbying activity that makes a call to action or refers to specific legislation is generally considered lobbying, whether done by AFS headquarters or Units, and may result in the revocation of the organization's 501(c)(3) status. Note that AFS or its members may be involved in congressional briefings, but these are to be educational/information only. The other restriction placed on all nonprofits is that its programs and services must align and support its exempt purpose—which in case of AFS and its Units is to promote the conservation, management, education and scientific advancement of the fisheries profession.

#### Federal, state, local, and income taxes:

As a 501(c)(3), AFS is exempt from federal income tax on activities related to its exempt purpose (with several exemptions for unrelated income). However, nonprofits are not automatically exempt from state income or other types of taxes. Once a federal income tax exemption is received by a nonprofit, it may also apply for an income tax exemption in the state(s) in which it does business. AFS has applied for and received an income tax exemption from the state of Maryland and it is up to each Unit to apply for a state income tax exemption and any other exemptions it may be afforded. Furthermore, a majority of states require organizations that fundraise to register in order to conduct charitable solicitation activities.

#### States sales and use tax

Being exempt from federal and state income tax does not automatically exempt the nonprofit from state sales and use tax.

#### Personal property and real estate tax

Being exempt from federal and state income tax also does not automatically exempt the nonprofit from state or local personal property or real estate taxes.

#### Business licenses

Although a nonprofit, AFS, as a corporation and legal entity, must register to do business in the state and local jurisdictions in which it is located. AFS is registered with the state of Maryland. It is up to each Unit to apply for a business license in the state in which the Unit is domiciled.

#### Business insurance

AFS offers for purchase a general liability insurance policy covering Units at a very reasonable cost. Units should carefully consider whether adding other business insurances such as director's liability, property, event cancellation and professional liability makes financial sense. For more information about the general liability plan, contact the AFS headquarters office.

#### Forward financial information to the AFS headquarters office if included in the AFS Unit Group Exemption

As part of the Group Exemption, AFS is required to report any changes affecting such exemption to the IRS each year.

### Make available a copy of the Unit's most recent 990 tax return (if one is filed for the Unit)

Many tax-exempt organizations must make available for public inspection a copy of their three most recent 990 forms (if a Unit is required to file one). All schedules to attachments filed with the Form 990 must be made available, except for the list of contributors to the organization.

### Charitable donations/contributions versus business expenses

Under IRS regulations, payments to AFS and its Units may be classified as either business expenses or charitable contributions by the individuals or companies making them. This distinction is very important for the payee. Generally, payment of dues, publication subscriptions, meeting and conference fees, continuing education fees, advertising charges, etc., are considered to be business expenses—meaning individuals or companies may deduct them, as appropriate, on their tax returns as such. As mentioned previously, AFS and its Units are 501(c)(3) organizations and can receive tax-deductible, charitable contributions from individuals and companies.

### Include disclosures on dues statements and solicitation letters

Dues notices should contain the following language: “Contributions or gifts to this organization are tax deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. However, payment of membership dues and subscriptions are not tax-deductible as charitable contributions.”

### Legal authority to sign contracts

Only elected and appointed officers of AFS Units are legally authorized to sign contracts committing the Unit to fiscal expenditures or other binding agreements, unless the authority has been delegated by one of those officials to another party (delegation must be in writing to be legal). In other words, no Unit member may authorize expenditures or commit the Unit to a course of action without proper written authorization and approval. This includes requests for grants, purchases of goods and services, hotels for meetings, etc.

### Postal permits and rates

AFS, as a nonprofit, enjoys reduced postal rates for various types of mailings. Units may also apply for the special rates under its own exemption; however, Units cannot use AFS's federal ID number.

### Fundraising solicitations

Some states require a solicitation license to solicit funds and donations from the general public (nonmembers) in that state. Please contact the AFS headquarters office for a copy of the AFS Development Policy, which provides guidelines on soliciting donations.

## Unit Committees and Volunteers

### What is a Committee?

Unit officers and individual members help to carry out the Unit's charge, but committees typically carry the majority of a Unit's workload. Most Units have standing committees and special committees.

Standing committees are those that have a continuing charge from year to year and are defined in the Unit's bylaws. Membership, nominating, and continuing education committees are all examples of standing committees—each has responsibilities from year to year, regardless of the Unit president's plan of work. Special committees are those created by the Unit president to fulfill a specific charge over the course of a finite, relatively short period of time. Often, special committees are created to address a specific project, such as bylaws revision, strategic plan development, publishing a proceedings or other book. Special committees may also be established to oversee new programs, such as a new award or scholarship. Unlike standing committees, which function unless Unit bylaws are suspended or revised to eliminate the committee, special committees dissolve at the end of a Unit president's term, unless reestablished and reappointed by their successor. If a special committee's charge develops into ongoing responsibilities, Unit members may elect to revise their bylaws to create a new standing committee with this charge. The current list of standing and special Society-level committees are located at <http://fisheries.org/about/committees/>.



Standing committee composition, including the number of required members, necessary representation, ex officio or other predetermined members, etc., is typically stipulated in the Unit bylaws. For example, bylaws may state that a Unit's nominating committee must have at least 3 members and is chaired by the immediate-past president. In most cases, committee chairs must be AFS members, but not all Units require committee members to be AFS members. Requirements aside, Unit leaders are encouraged to consider diversity—gender, racial/ethnic, generational, disciplinary, geographic, and otherwise—when making committee appointments. Committees that are diverse are more likely to consider a wider diversity of perspectives in fulfilling their obligations—innovation begins with the assembling of more and different ideas.

Additional recommendations for working with committees and volunteers is location at <http://fisheries.org/about/Units/guidelines/using-committees-and-volunteers/>

### The Role of the Officers/Executive Meeting

The roles of officers and standing committee chairs, all of whom must be Society members in good standing are clearly specified in Unit bylaws. For example, the treasurer is responsible for monitoring, documenting, and reporting the Unit's financial transactions, the newsletter editor is responsible for assembling and distributing a newsletter to Unit members on a quarterly basis, etc. As members of the

Executive Committee (EXCOM), however, officers and other Unit leaders have specific responsibilities beyond that of Unit members, committee chairs, etc. As elected/appointed representatives of the Unit membership, EXCOM members are given considerable authority beyond that of the office or chair they occupy. For example, a Unit EXCOM may have the authority to make financial decisions or conduct other Unit business without consulting the full membership. For this reason, it is essential that EXCOM members be actively engaged, informed, and approach their role in a deliberative, conscientious manner.

## Running a Business Meeting

### Robert's Rules of Order

Most of us have attended meetings that were poorly planned, inefficiently conducted, and unproductive. Some may have experienced a meeting complicated by side-bar discussions, seemingly



never-ending circular debates, or even being 'hijacked' by one or a few vocal attendees. When meetings are mandatory, we have no choice but to participate, regardless of how well (or not) the meeting is run. As volunteers, however, AFS members can choose whether to attend and participate in meetings. By planning ahead and leading the meeting effectively, members will feel that your meeting is a good use of their time and continue to attend, engage, and participate.

Robert's Rules of Order is the 'gold standard' for parliamentary procedure and, as specified in the AFS Constitution, is the authoritative guidance for conducting AFS and Unit business. Unit leaders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with Robert's Rules. Though many find parliamentary procedure to be intimidating, Robert's Rules exist to help run effective meetings and to conduct business in a fair, transparent manner. The current edition of Robert's Rules of Order is the defining source, but the Wikipedia entry for Robert's Rules of Order provides a wealth of information regarding parliamentary procedure that is an appropriate introduction for most Unit leaders. Other quick reference sources can be readily found online and may even be distributed to attendees at the meeting ([http://diphi.web.unc.edu/files/2012/02/MSG-ROBERTS\\_RULES\\_CHEAT\\_SHEET.pdf](http://diphi.web.unc.edu/files/2012/02/MSG-ROBERTS_RULES_CHEAT_SHEET.pdf)). A more in-depth resource, specifically tailored for AFS leaders, "Running a Meeting under Robert's Rules of Order: A Primer for AFS Unit Leaders", is provided at <http://fisheries.org/about/Units/guidelines/roberts-rules-of-order/>. The Primer addresses the proper order of business, approving minutes, handling motions, types of motions, adjourning meetings, and recording minutes with brief, easy-to-follow guidance. Unit leaders are strongly encouraged to review the Primer before meetings to familiarize themselves with Robert's Rules or to refresh their knowledge. Knowing and following Robert's Rules will ensure a fair



deliberative process, whereby all are allowed to speak to a matter, but no individual can dominate the discussion or force a decision in any direction.

Although Unit presidents are responsible for presiding over a meeting, it can be quite difficult to manage the meeting and parliamentary procedure at the same time. For this reason, it is customary to establish a parliamentarian at the outset of any meeting. For the Society, this is the Constitutional Consultant. If your Unit does not have a formally recognized parliamentarian, anyone familiar with parliamentary procedure present at the meeting can be asked to serve in this capacity for the duration of the meeting (former parliamentarians or past-presidents of the Unit are often good choices). This individual will help to keep the meeting and flow of business on-track and in compliance with Robert's Rules of Order.

Leaders often know what they are trying to accomplish on behalf of their Unit, but are unsure as to how to approach some of the formalities of conducting business according to Robert's Rules. In many cases, there are multiple ways to get the business done, some of which are easier and more straightforward than others. The AFS Constitutional Consultant is an excellent resource for information regarding Robert's Rules of Order, as well as preparing motions for consideration by the Unit or Governing Board.

For more information specific to running AFS Unit business meetings, see <http://fisheries.org/about/Units/guidelines/conducting-business-meeting-guidelines/> and <http://fisheries.org/about/Units/guidelines/roberts-rules-of-order/>

### Planning an Annual Meeting

AFS has many suggestions and resources available to assist Units with site and venue selection, hotel contracting, meeting planning and running a tradeshow. Contact the AFS Meetings Manager, for more information and assistance.

#### Deciding on a Location

Ease of travel for attendees, air fare costs, attractiveness, walking distance venues, per night hotel rate, meeting cost are all important considerations. Be sure to consider the possibility of hidden costs. For example, many properties will look attractive based on rental pricing, but food and beverage costs could make the total event cost two to three times that of a nearby property. The AFS Headquarters Office staff can help you evaluate different



locations and venues, as well as offer recommendations for other service providers that can assist with the planning and management of large events.

### Negotiating Hotel, Meeting Space, and Other Contracts

Send out an RFP (Request for Proposal) to target properties in your requested area, and only the properties that can accommodate your request will reply. Read responses carefully and if you're unclear about certain provisions, ask for more direct wording or propose a revision / counteroffer. Be cautious of attrition commitments on contracts. It is always best to ask for meeting rooms and function space that is too large rather than asking for more space later. Once the hotel contract has been signed, it will be very expensive to add additional space. If you target an area off-season, nearly everything is negotiable including food and beverage pricing.

### Managing Registration

There are several companies that charge a per person fee from \$0.99 to \$4.00 a person +3% bank charges for managing registrations. AFS staff can provide a few suggestions regarding service providers.

### Running a Trade Show

Attracting exhibitors can be difficult. Targeting existing personal relationships and federal and state/provincial agency affiliations is often effective. Handing out booth registration forms at the



conclusion of the current meeting for next year will also generate interest among existing exhibitors, particularly if the tradeshow was successful. Between meetings, make sure to stay in contact with exhibitors and provide updates about the upcoming meeting. Offer benefits for becoming a sponsor or exhibitor and try to have extra activities at the tradeshow to keep traffic flowing during slow times. Examples of extra activities include cooking

demonstrations, cyber cafés, breaks, or raffles. During the meeting, regularly check in with exhibitors to ensure there are no problems.

### Running a Raffle, Silent or Live Auction

Try to solicit items as far in advance as possible from vendors, crafters, tackle and fishing manufacturers, recreational and industry suppliers, sporting goods stores, or other potential contributors. Request a deadline for receipt of the items and distribute a list of auction items to registered attendees to generate interest. Consider holding a live auction for 'big ticket' items, such as personal watercraft,

guided trips/tours, etc., as this approach is usually the best way to encourage friendly competition among bidders and increase the revenue these items generate.

### Planning for Special Attendees and Other Guests

Besides your membership and leaders, consider other guests who might be attending your meeting and require accommodations or assistance. These may include other AFS Unit leaders who may wish to formally participate in business meetings, plenaries, or other events (e.g., Society officers typically attend Division and other Unit meetings and speak on behalf of the Society to the membership or Executive Committee) or international attendees or other guests (e.g., invited plenary speakers) who may be unfamiliar with the location or other aspects of the meeting. These individuals may need more information regarding logistics, help with accommodations, etc., so be sure to plan ahead and provide assistance when needed.



## AFS Headquarters Office Support and Resources

### When You Need Help – Meet Your AFS Staff

For quick contacts on frequently asked questions and topics visit <http://fisheries.org/about/contact-us/> or for a complete list of AFS staff <http://fisheries.org/about/meet-the-staff/>

### Unit Services Offered by AFS Headquarters Office

The AFS Headquarters staff can provide support for a variety of Unit services. For information about these services, including any associated costs, please contact: Jasmine Sewell, ext. 205 or [jsewell@fisheries.org](mailto:jsewell@fisheries.org)



### Communications and Web Services

#### Social Media

Communications staff can assist Units with creation of various social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram) and help users to set up “handles” and security systems.

#### Website Services

AFS offers a package of web services including site migration, hosting and technical support services for an annual fee. AFS covers the cost for hosting Unit web site domains and can help facilitate web site

design, development, training, support and maintenance. There may be costs associated with some of services when provided by external web development and support professionals.

### ***Online Communities Forum***

AFS owns an online tool called Communities, which can allow a Unit to host multiple forum platforms, each offering its own discussion forums, document libraries, coauthored wikis, and personal blogs. Multiple announcements can be sent out to all participants. Communities are moderated, and can have multiple moderators and administrators. Each can be organized around any type of group such as sections, technical committee's or other areas of interest. This system is set up through the AFS Membership department.

### **Financial Services**

#### ***General Liability Insurance***

AFS offers a low cost insurance program for Units to acquire commercial general liability (CGL) insurance. CGL insurance policies typically cover your organization for claims involving bodily injury and property damage resulting from services or operations. Many AFS Chapters purchase it to cover risks that may arise during its meetings. CGL insurance doesn't cover employee injuries, auto accidents, punitive damages (in most states), workmanship, intentional acts or professional mistakes.

#### ***Investment Opportunities for Unit Funds***

Many AFS Units (Sections, Chapters and Divisions) have acquired moderate to substantial funds but have insufficient means to invest those funds properly. AFS can provide a service by investing these funds for the units as part of its overall investment portfolio and provide the potential for greater return on investment at a reasonable cost.

### **Administrative Services**

#### ***Membership Data Coordination***

AFS assists Unit leaders with documents pertaining to their officer duties including tax documents, rules and/or bylaws and creating new student subunits.

AFS also tracks officer positions in over 150 units across the Society in its database. Units are encourage to notify AFS whenever a change in unit leadership occurs by submitting an officer change report. The form is available here: <http://fisheries.org/about/units/guidelines/change-of-officer-report/>

#### ***Award Plaques and Certificates***

HQ generates awards for all of the units and meetings. This process includes: ordering plaques; making certificates; annual Society awards; mailing out orders; and awards billing.

#### ***Survey Tools***

Unit leaders (only) will receive passwords for free access to our survey mechanism, Survey Monkey. It can be used for casting officer election votes, surveying special target audiences, and getting quantitative and qualitative feedback from Members.

## **Meetings and Education**

### ***Meeting Contracting***

AFS can assist Units with contracting for meeting and sleeping rooms along with food, beverage and related meeting services offered by the property.

### ***Education Delivery and Webinar Hosting***

AFS is developing systems capabilities to deliver and host distance education programs. These services will provide new avenues for supplying professional development and education opportunities across the Society. The timeline is to gradually bring programs online during 2017.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What if I believe misconduct has occurred?**

Members of the American Fisheries Society (AFS) have an obligation to perform their duties in an ethical manner. First and foremost, on joining the AFS, a member accepts the responsibility to serve and manage aquatic resources for the benefit of those resources and of the public, based on the best scientific data, as specified by the Society's "North American Fisheries Policy" (see Fisheries 21[3]:26-29). He/she acts ethically in his/her relationships with the general public and with his/her employers, employees, and associates, and he/she follows the tenets of the Society's Equal Opportunity Policy (see 2013 AFS Membership Directory and Handbook, page v). He/she strives to preserve and enhance the fisheries profession. Further, all members must adhere to the "Standard of Professional Conduct" (<http://fisheries.org/about/governance/standards-of-professional-conduct/>). If you believe that misconduct has occurred, either in the context of AFS business or a member's professional responsibilities, you are encouraged to consult the chair of the Society's Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee for guidance.

### **What is advocacy and what level of advocacy is appropriate for different Units vs. the Society?**

Advocacy may be simply defined as arguing for a cause, often on behalf of others. Arguments may be written or expressed orally, and often they must be developed quickly to respond to a pending issue. In general, Society advocacy pertains to broad fisheries issues that have national or even international consequences. AFS Unit involvement in advocacy is generally at a level corresponding to the mission of the Unit and typically involves more localized issues or narrower subject areas.



Society-level engagement in the advocacy arena is addressed in the Advocacy Guidelines

(<http://fisheries.org/policy-media/advocacy-guidelines/>), which outline criteria for determining when and how the Society should get involved. This document also outlines additional criteria that Units should consider before engaging in advocacy. As with any Society activity, it is essential that any advocacy—by the Society or its Units—be free of bias and based in sound



science. Like science or management, advocacy can be contentious—Unit leaders are encouraged to choose words carefully. Units or their members can contact the policy staff at the AFS headquarters office for help in determining best courses of action.

### **What is an affiliate member?**

“Affiliate membership” is a catch-all category used to describe individuals that are members of an AFS Unit, but are not members of the Society. Several Sections, including the Fish Culture, Fish Health, Genetics Sections, have recognized affiliate membership in their bylaws. Some Chapters have similarly recognized affiliate membership categories, whereas others have prohibited affiliate membership; perhaps the majority of Units do not formally recognize affiliate membership, but allow it by the participation of non-AFS members at their annual meetings. The history and present practicalities of affiliate membership are complicated, but the bottom line is that affiliates are not able to vote or serve the Society or fully reap the benefits of membership. The Society has good reason to want to bring affiliates ‘into the fold,” but some fisheries professionals only recognize value in participating at the Chapter or Section level. AFS has wrestled with the issues of affiliate membership for many years and will likely continue to do so. Until such time as the questions of affiliate membership are resolved once and for all, your job as a Unit leader is to know the difference between affiliate membership and Society membership, be able to articulate the differences to current or prospective members, and understand and enforce procedural limitations related to affiliate member participation in Society business (i.e., serving on or chairing committees, voting).