

American Fisheries Society, Fisheries Administrators Section
Membership Survey, September 11, 2005

Introduction Members of the American Fisheries Society’s Fisheries Administrators Section have recently expressed concern about declining participation in section activities, particularly the Spring meeting. During the Spring, 2005 meeting, members decided to solicit input from all current, past or potential members to determine if there are any steps that can be taken to better serve Section membership. This report summarizes the results of a written survey. Additionally, volunteers were charged with contacting fish chiefs in neighboring states to obtain more informal feedback.

Survey On July 15, 2005, a 3 page survey was emailed to all current section members, all state fish chiefs, and selected federal administrators. The survey was accompanied by a letter from Section President Doug Stang describing the section and its activities. The survey contained a mix of multiple choice and open ended questions concerning each of the main section activities: Spring meeting, Fall business meeting, SFR award program, AFS Governing Board participation, and representation of FAS members on national level policy issues. Questions were also asked about AFS and FAS membership, respondent job duties, and general comments on how to improve section activities. Copies of the letter and survey are attached as Appendix 1. An email reminder was sent to all those who initially received the survey on August 15, 2005.

Survey Results

** Out of approximately 250 emails sent, 63 responses were received from 1-3 persons in 35 different states.*

Table 1. Job types and employing agencies of respondents.

I work for	My job is						Grand Total
	Other	Other administrator	Staff	Top agency administrator	Top regional administrator	(blank)	
Conservation Org			2				2
Federal/national			8		3		11
Private Business	1		1				2
State/Province			15	2	25	4	47
University			1				1
Grand Total	1	25	4	28	4	1	63

Table 2. American Fisheries Society (AFS) and Fisheries Administrators Section (FAS) membership status of survey respondents.

Respondents	FAS Member		Grand Total
	Yes	No	
AFS Member			
Yes	56	4	60
No		3	3
Grand Total	56	7	63

Table 3. How often do FAS members and non-members attend the annual Spring meeting?

		FAS Member		
Attend Spring Meeting	Data	Yes	No	Grand Total
Never	Count	16	5	21
	Percent	29%	71%	33%
Occasionally	Count	19		19
	Percent	34%	0%	30%
Once	Count	4	2	6
	Percent	7%	29%	10%
Quit Attending	Count	6		6
	Percent	11%	0%	10%
Regularly	Count	11		11
	Percent	20%	0%	17%
Total Count		56	7	63
Total Percent		100%	100%	100%

Table 4. Primary reasons why people attend the Spring meeting.

<i>Discussion of issues and policies, idea exchange</i>	16
<i>Networking</i>	14
<i>See what's happening in other states</i>	5
<i>Update on national/federal issues</i>	4
<i>Interest in FAS or AFS activities</i>	4
<i>Fishing</i>	3
<i>Assigned to attend</i>	3
<i>Participating in agenda item</i>	3
<i>Close meeting location</i>	3
<i>Attending other meeting</i>	3

Table 5. Primary reasons why people do not attend the Spring meeting.

<i>Competing time demands</i>	22
<i>Funding constraints</i>	20
<i>Travel restrictions</i>	11
<i>Not a priority</i>	7
<i>Poor agenda</i>	7
<i>Didn't receive information</i>	2

Table 6. Summary of responses to questions concerning factors that would make respondent more likely to attend the Spring meeting.

Options for Improving Attendance at Spring Meeting	FAS Members	Non-FAS Members	Total
More agencies	12	2	14
On weekends	6	0	6
During week	11	1	12
Held in Spring	14	0	14
Another time of year (1)	5	0	5
Held with IAFWA FWRP Committee	23	2	25
Held with other meeting (2)	7	3	10
Rotating locations	24	1	25
Central location (3)	4	0	4
Separate division meetings	6	3	9
Shorter	2	0	2
Longer with more social activities	3	0	3
Longer with more agenda items	4	1	5
Improved agenda (4)	6	1	7
More training	10	0	10
One day on issue	10	1	11

(1) Late winter, Spring

(2) AFS Division Meetings, SEAFWA, North American FWC, Other fisheries meeting or symposium

(3) DC, St. Louis, Memphis, KC, Central US, Ready/cheap airport access

(4) Action oriented, national scope, specific issues, earlier distribution, high profile administrators, international speaker, funding opportunities, real world problems, agency structure, SWG, national and federal updates

Table 7. Highlights of comments on how to improve the Spring meetings.

****Prefer agendas dominated by state issues.***

****Too many meetings, hold jointly with other meetings.***

****Don't add social activities – harder to justify and increases length of meetings.***

****Improve agenda with issues that impact large groups of states and focus on problem solving.***

****Viewed as “chiefs” meeting – need to be more inclusive.***

****Better communication on upcoming meeting arrangements and agenda.***

****Need more federal agency participation.***

****Get more agencies to participate.***

Table 8. How often do FAS members and non-members attend the Fall business meeting?

Attend fall meeting	Data	FAS Member		Grand Total
		Yes	No	
Never	Count	6	2	8
	Percent	11%	29%	13%
Occasionally	Count	26	2	28
	Percent	46%	29%	44%
Once	Count	6	3	9
	Percent	11%	43%	14%
Quit Attending	Count	2		2
	Percent	4%	0%	3%
Regularly	Count	15		15
	Percent	27%	0%	24%
No Answer	Count	1		1
	Percent	2%	0%	2%
Total Count		56	7	63
Total Percent		100%	100%	100%

Table 9. Primary reasons that people attend the Fall business meeting.

<i>Section business</i>	16
<i>Discussion of issues and policies, idea exchange</i>	14
<i>Attending AFS annual meeting anyway</i>	10
<i>Networking</i>	9
<i>See what's happening in other states</i>	3
<i>Student job search</i>	1
<i>Fish</i>	1

Table 10. Primary reasons why people do not attend the Fall business meeting.

<i>Issues with AFS meeting (cost, limited agency attendance, conflicts with other sections)</i>	15
<i>Competing time demands</i>	7
<i>Funding constraints</i>	5
<i>Conflicts with IAFWA</i>	2
<i>Travel restrictions</i>	2

Table 11. Highlights of comments on how to improve Fall business meeting.

- * *Add agenda items and expand beyond 2 hour time period.*
- * *Do not hold with AFS annual meeting.*

Table 12. Were respondents aware of FAS' Sport Fish Restoration Outstanding Project Award program?

Aware of SFR awards	Data	Total
No	Count	5
	Percent	8%
Yes	Count	55
	Percent	92%
No Answer	Count	
	Percent	0%
Total Count		60
Total Percent		100%

Table 13. How frequently do respondents submit SFR award nominations?

Submits nominations	Data	Total
Never	Count	6
	Percent	13%
Occasionally	Count	36
	Percent	77%
Regularly	Count	5
	Percent	11%
No Answer	Count	
	Percent	0%
Total Count		47
Total Percent		100%

Table 14. Primary reasons why respondents submit SFR award nominations.

<i>Recognition of Program</i>	23
<i>Staff Recognition</i>	7
<i>SFR Awareness</i>	7
<i>Support from Commission, Legislature</i>	4
<i>Industry awareness</i>	1

Table 15. Primary reasons why respondents do not submit SFR award nominations.

<i>Not affiliated with state agency</i>	4
<i>Time to submit nomination</i>	4
<i>Don't have good projects annually</i>	2
<i>Frustration with judging or lack of feedback</i>	3
<i>No interest</i>	2

Table 16. Highlight comments on SFR award program.

- * ***Include category for federal agency projects.***
- * ***Send press release on winners to American Sportfishing Association for their newsletter.***
- * ***Provide feedback on unsuccessful projects.***
- * ***Need more publicity.***
- * ***Uncertainty about whether to submit individual projects or agency programs.***
- * ***Work with Fish Management Section to solicit nominations.***
- * ***Solicit nominations from USFWS federal aid fishery specialists.***
- * ***Catalog winners on website.***
- * ***Recognition more important to members than SFR recognition.***

Table 17. Opinions of respondents on Fisheries Administrators Section representation on American Fisheries Society Governing Board.

	Current Gov Board representation adequate				
FAS representation on Gov Board important	Don't Know	No	Yes	No Answer	Grand Total
Don't know	1				1
No			1		1
Yes	9	5	37	6	57
No Answer					
Grand Total	10	5	38	6	59

Table 18. Highlights of comments on Administrators Section representation on AFS Governing Board.

- * *Retain seat on Special Management Committee*
- * *Review 200 member voting rule as it pertains to unique sections like FAS*
- * *AFS needs adequate perspective from fisheries administrators and managers to balance academic perspectives*
- * *FAS should show leadership on developing relevant policy issues*
- * *Section does not always have relevant issues to be represented.*
- * *Collaborate more closely with Fish Management and Culture Sections*
- * *Push for more AFS staff representation at national policy level*
- * *Limited membership makes it difficult to keep active*

Table 19. Respondents' views on importance of having policy issues represented at the national level.

Count of FAS representation national policy	Current national policy representation adequate				Grand Total
	Don't know	No	Yes	No Answer	
Don't know		1			1
No				1	1
Yes		7	11	33	58
No Answer				7	
Grand Total		8	11	34	7

Table 20. Respondents' views on whether AFS Fisheries Administrators Section is the best representative for policy issues at the national level.

FAS best representative	Total
Don't know	6
Maybe	1
No	8
Yes	38
Grand Total	53

Table 21. Respondents' views on whether there are better ways to achieve representation on policy issues at the national level.

Better ways for national policy representation	Total
Don't know	2
No	18
Policy dependent	1
Yes*	12
Grand Total	33

(*Collaboration with IAFWA, American Sportfishing Association, and other AFS sections and technical committees; More involvement by AFS staff)

Table 22. Highlights of comments by respondents on FAS involvement in national policy issues.

- * *More collaboration with IAFWA*
- * *Develop a stronger fisheries presence at IAFWA*
- * *FAS should be more active in developing policy issues for AFS*
- * *Administrators are already members of FAS, FMS, IAFWA, ASA, RBFF, etc.*
- * *FAS should be key group in developing fishery agency policy issues and positions - but needs to work broadly with AFS, IAFWA, ASA and other relevant groups to make it happen.*

Table 23. Overall comments by respondents on how to improve section services.

- * General Assembly needs to fund sufficient middle management positions so that I could allocate scarce time to this purpose.
- * Long time active AFS member (chapter and division chair) now questioning relevance when time and funding at premium. With AFS not taking advocacy role, time/money better spent at NE Fish Admin Assoc and IAFWA.
- * Representation of IAFWA committees and recognition by state fish and wildlife directors that fisheries administrators have issues worth addressing (IAFWA should not deal only with wildlife issues)
- * **On pertinent issues perhaps states could summarize how they handled - ie NY and cormorants.** Need to find better way to share actions and successes.
- * No silver bullet - occurring in other sections and NGOs. Viewed as "fish chiefs section" so limited appeal - perhaps name change to "Policy and Admin." Encourage younger and mid level staff via continuing ed courses.
- * **Add benefits info to salary survey.**
- * I plan to continue membership even if I am not able to attend meetings on a regular basis.
- * Member for 20 years - worthwhile to get pulse of state issues. **Meeting notes, newsletters helpful.** To move beyond "fish chief club" need to **better involve federal and other agencies** who often have programs of similar size. Training/mentoring for admin
- * Hard to get comfortable and break into this group. **Little is done to get new members at the meetings, involved in section activities, or acquainted with other members.** Feels like "class" system - fish chiefs and others.
- * I am not an administrator but do research to support fisheries management and provide info upon which administrators base decisions. I think it is important to be a member and am satisfied with the way that FAS is working.
- * **Moving spring meeting in conjunction with North American makes great sense.** Negative is loss of fishing opportunity, but there are other social choices. Need more than 5 chiefs at this meeting.
- * **Create discussion board** where questions can be posed easily
- * **FAS should be primary contact point for foreign fisheries organizations. FAS should make efforts to establish links with similar organizations and groups throughout the world.**
- * **Collate examples of successful license increases or creative fisheries funding sources. Advice on increasing diversity in workforce.** Haven't been active in FAS but hope to in future. Mandatory involvement in marine entities limits time.
- * I enjoy the involvement with regional and national issues. Discussions of ties with other programs and groups that support improved aquatic habitat and fisheries resources. Identification of research needs. Funding and other organizational issues.
- * **Web site for current issues** of interest to fisheries administrators. **Survey administrators on issues** and post results, one stop shopping for national level information, use email to alert to new content.
- * I'm a member now and don't have any further expectations
- * **Informative email newsletter.** Had to keep on the meeting without follow up.
- * FAS working with IAFWA committees will foster FAS' recognition and position. Main problem is the active people on these committees are a small subset of the membership - will need more participation to be more active and influential.
- * Have **clearinghouse to provide info on how agencies handle common issues** - fishing tournaments, consumption advisories, reorganizations, etc. Would take someone's effort to do this which is problematic.
- * AFS need more involvement in DC political decisions. AFS staff are not involved in FishNET and other NGOs in DC. I spend more time on IAFWA and ASA because they are more active. **More communication between FAS and AFS staff on policy.**
- * Consider **internet-based meeting** so those of us that can't travel much can participate or at least hear what is happening at the meetings.
- * Monitor states' progress of conservation actions on aquatic species within Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategies. Ensure that aquatic species are fully represented in these plans. **Expand awards program to aquatic projects funded by SWG.**
- * Would be helpful to have a **continuing education/workshop component that was really geared to administrators** such as visioning, emerging science, working across agencies, partnerships.
- * **Website, newsletter or clearinghouse board, more directed work on specific policy issues, closer collaboration with other groups, more joint meetings, more federal involvement.**