

Fisheries Administrators Section – Strategy for North American Agenda for Aquatic Resources

At the September, 2005 meeting of the Fisheries Administrators Section of the American Fisheries Society (FAS) in Anchorage, Alaska, the FAS membership approved a motion to assist in the development and implementation of the *North American Agenda for Aquatic Resources* (NAAAR). At the Anchorage meeting, discussion on FAS support for the NAAAR and the development of a framework/ strategy to move the NAAAR forward indicated strong support for NAAAR but lack of consensus on the specific strategies to further NAAAR.

The specific motion that was approved is below (highlighted), with a suggested “straw-man” strategy (below) for FAS to consider and improve upon in the development of the NAAAR. FAS President Gary Saul, will seek volunteers and appoint a Committee to develop the strategy and framework.

Approved Motion:

Move that the American Fisheries Society - Fisheries Administrators Section (FAS) commit to develop and sustain a long-term strategy to support the development of the *North American Agenda for Aquatic Resources* (NAAAR) including the following specific actions: increase recognition of fisheries and aquatic resource issues and opportunities within the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (IAFWA); create FAS subcommittees aligned with the NAAAR; and, make active use of the subcommittees to motivate key fisheries administrators to join FAS and to then become active in development and support of the NAAAR.

Draft/ “Strawman” Strategy

1. **Increase recognition of fisheries and aquatic resource issues and opportunities within the IAFWA;**
 - a. Ensure that FAS members are active participants in the IAFWA Fisheries and Water Resource Policy Committee (IAFWA/FWRPC).
 - b. Ensure that AFS/FAS members of the IAFWA/FWRPC are knowledgeable about the issues, goals, and objectives of the NAAAR.
 - c. Accept the first four issues of the NAAAR as the basis for creating subcommittees within FAS charged with developing and implementing strategies to create similar subcommittees within the IAFWA/FWRPC – all with the longer-term goal of moving these IAFWA/FWRPC subcommittees to full IAFWA committee status.

2. **Create four FAS subcommittees; and,**
 - a. Habitat Protection, Restoration, and Mitigation Subcommittee
 - i. Co-Chairs: (to be volunteered, nominated, drafted – see below)

- ii. Membership: (to be volunteered, nominated, drafted)

- iii. Goal: Identify and protect existing aquatic, riparian and watershed habitat essential to maintaining viable fisheries, and restore lost or damaged habitats.

- iv. Guiding Principles:
 - 1. Protection of current natural habitats is preferable to restoration or mitigation.
 - 2. Restoration of natural habitats should take priority over creation of artificial habitats.
 - 3. Mitigation of in-kind-in-place habitats is the highest priority, followed by in-kind elsewhere, followed by other mitigation types.

- v. Possible Actions:
 - 1. Support the National Fish Habitat initiative, but recognize that it is limited to the U.S.
 - 2. Develop, where needed, or effectively implement strong regulatory programs and authorities that would alleviate the loss of these habitats or require their restoration.
 - a. Preserve and strengthen existing water quality and wetlands protection laws, and seek new legislation wherever necessary.
 - 3. Develop and apply a system of best-practices, focused on sustaining healthy fish populations, for use in situations where aquatic habitats will be affected by planned actions.
 - a. Develop and evaluate ecosystem level approaches to understanding and protecting aquatic habitats and mitigating aquatic habitat loss.
 - b. Ensure proper consideration of fish habitat needs in water development projects, water diversions, and water project re-licensing.
 - 4. Develop and deploy consistent public information and education programs to emphasize public recognition of the consequences of the loss of these aquatic, riparian and watershed habitats.

b. Conservation of Fish Stocks by Sustainable Use Subcommittee

- i. Co-Chairs: (to be volunteered, nominated, drafted – see below))

- ii. Membership: (to be volunteered, nominated, drafted)

- iii. Goal: Conserve and rationally use aquatic organisms by taking into account uncertainty in stock assessments, improving existing stock management paradigms and developing new ones.

- iv. Guiding Principle: Overharvest and by-catch of aquatic organisms are major threats to the sustainable management of natural resources.

- v. Possible Actions:

1. Develop, evaluate, and implement innovative fishery management tools.
 - a. Develop and evaluate ecosystem-based approaches to managing fisheries that insure sustainability of all fisheries.
 - b. Integrate social and economic consequences of harvest and overharvest into fisheries management.
 2. Improve or create systems and structures to coordinate multi-jurisdictional management of shared fishery resources including formalizing conflict and issue resolution processes.
 - a. Define, quantify, and reduce the extent and significance of incidental mortality of aquatic organisms (by-catch) in North American fisheries.
 3. Recover depleted stocks.
 - a. Improve and extend data collection, catch estimation and stock assessments to provide the scientific basis for management decisions.
 - i. Expand research on food web dynamics to allow rational determination of biological catch of aquatic resources.
 - b. Implement risk-averse decision-making to avoid overharvest.
 - i. Establish mortality levels necessary to ensure sustainable and rational use of resources.
- c. Introductions of Aquatic Invasive Species Subcommittee
- i. Chair: (to be volunteered, nominated, drafted – see below)
 - ii. Membership: (to be volunteered, nominated, drafted)
 - iii. Goal: Halt introductions of aquatic invasive species.
 - iv. Guiding Principles:
 1. Introduction of aquatic invasive species must be stopped.
 2. Prevention of further introductions should take precedence over control of established invasive species by using precautionary approaches to evaluate species importation and introduction.
 - v. Possible Actions:
 1. Develop a better understanding of the effects of introductions of aquatic invasive organisms on recipient ecosystems.
 2. Enhance public recognition of the problems caused by introduction and establishment of aquatic invasive species.
 - a. Inform policy-makers and provide effective and efficient options that clearly describe the costs of inaction or delay.
 3. Maintain and improve, where necessary, the integrity and effectiveness of Federal law enforcement programs.
 4. Support fishery agency efforts to implement legislation to prevent undesirable introduction of aquatic invasive species.

- d. Development and Use of Drugs and Chemicals for Aquaculture, Fishery Research and Management Subcommittee
- i. Chair: (to be volunteered, nominated, drafted – see below)
 - ii. Membership: (to be volunteered, nominated, drafted)
 - iii. Goal: Endorse and actively support development, testing and registration of drugs and chemicals useful in fishery management, aquaculture, and research.
 - iv. Guiding Principles:
 1. Fisheries agencies rely upon a variety of drugs and chemicals that are useful in fishery management, aquaculture, and research.
 2. Registration and use of chemicals and drugs must be managed rigorously in the interests of safety and preventing avoidable risks to human and ecosystem health.
 3. Development, testing, and registration of these drugs and chemicals must be adequately funded.
 - v. Possible Actions:
 1. Solicit written information describing needs, uses and relevant experiences from agencies using chemical agents.
 2. Support adequate funding for the development, testing, and registration of drugs and chemicals to be used in fishery management, aquaculture, and research.
 3. Facilitate a task force composed of representative of Federal, State, Provincial, tribal and private sector aquaculture interests to establish reasonable standards for use of chemical agents.
3. **Make active use of the subcommittees to motivate key fisheries administrators to join FAS and to then become active in development and support of the North American Agenda for Aquatic Resources.**

Note: It is important to choose subcommittee chairs with the following assets:

- Personal interest and commitment to the issue, goal, and guiding principles of the subcommittee;
- The ability to recruit up to five fisheries administrators who are either currently AFS-FAS members or willing to become AFS-FAS members as subcommittee members;
- Time to oversee the activities of the subcommittee and the support of their agency to enable the work to be done;
- Interest in and the capacity to attend and participate in the IAFWA and North American committee meetings; and,
- Patience, a sense of humor, persistence, and the capacity to motivate subcommittee members and to help them sustain their interest and participation.