

No. 62	Special Committee for Scientific Communications	Julie Claussen
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**Governing Board Report to the American Fisheries Society
AFS Special Committee for Scientific Communications
August 2013**

TO: John Boreman, President
FROM: Julie Claussen, Chair
DATE: August 07, 2013

Committee members:

Jeremiah Osborne-Gowey, Elden Hawkes Jr., Jessica Rhodes, Marissa Jones, Iris Kemp, Ryan Roberts, Cliff Hutt, Cleve Steward, Walt Duffy, Sara Gilbert-Fox, Aaron Lerner, Patrick Cooney, Beth Beard, Sarah Michele Glaser, Shivonne Nesbit, Stephen Midway, Julie Delfilippi

I. Motion

(A) No motion is required

II. Activity Report:

(A) Summary of Outcomes and Accomplishments:

Many professional societies are currently using social media as a mechanism for outreach and education, as a way to provide services for their membership, and to attract new members. To stay relevant among its members, as well as within the fisheries science community, AFS should review how it is currently using social media and how it can be further be used to meet the societies goals.

At the start of his term as AFS President, John Boreman appointed this committee to assess how science communication using social media methods and technology can benefit the AFS. Under the AFS Strategic Plan, our activities assist in the following objectives:

Objective 1.1. Promote fisheries conservation throughout North America and the world, at all levels of government and society, and among all levels of AFS by supporting sound science and networking opportunities.

Objective 3.1. Determine and respond to the needs and opinions of AFS members.

Objective 3.2. Enhance participation of students and professionals at all levels of the society to assure recruitment, retention, and leadership development into the future.

Objective 3.4. Develop innovative and cost effective methods to make fisheries science and management information readily available to AFS members and all levels of government entities worldwide.

The committee held monthly conference calls to address our list of charges. There are two main areas and several questions the committee addressed:

Within AFS:

- ◆ How can AFS use social media to support communication and connect among its members?
- ◆ How are individual AFS subunits using social media to connect to their members? Is this a method that can be promoted to better serve subunit membership?
- ◆ Are there any standards that are needed among the subunits when designing their Facebook pages, running a LinkedIn group or twitter account, etc.?
- ◆ Would it be useful for subunits to have a how-to guide on setting up and using various social media tools?
- ◆ How are other professional societies strategically using social media?

Outside of AFS

- ◆ How can AFS use social media to attract fisheries professionals?
- ◆ As a professional society, should AFS use social media to increase awareness on larger environmental issues?
- ◆ How can AFS effectively use social media to connect with anglers and aquatic resource conservationists?
- ◆ Can (and should) AFS take a more active a role in training new fisheries professionals to be more effective communicators?
- ◆ What are the best methods/tools to evaluate AFS success/shortcomings online?

Science Communication Survey: Our first step was to assess how individual AFS units and subunits are currently using social media to connect to their membership. We conducted a survey, constructed by committee member, Cliff Hutt, on Survey Monkey. The survey was sent out to all Presidents of all AFS Units and Subunits on January 16th with two follow-up requests.

The committee collated responses and Cliff Hutt presented these results at the mid-term governing board meeting. In addition the results were recently published in the August issue of Fisheries, titled “*Science Communication in a Digital Age: Social Media and the American Fisheries Society*”. As stated in the article, three major themes emerged: 1) The majority of AFS units and subunits are engaged in social media at some level, indicating that this is currently an important form of communication for the membership, 2) Of those units not engaged, individual assistance, workshops, and how-to guides were listed as ways the AFS could help, suggesting that if this information was more readily available, social media may be useful to these units, 3) There is significant interest among AFS leadership for the parent society to provide assistance to units on the effective ways of using social media to communicate both within and outside of the society (i.e., an educational and outreach tool).

Wikipedia Entry for AFS: AFS does not yet have a Wikipedia entry. Cleve Steward has been working gathering general descriptions and historical information on AFS. He is continuing to work on a draft for committee comments and review.

The Oregon Chapter recently adopted a social media guideline. The committee is reviewing the need for a similar policy for the parent society. The feedback of the survey will provide valuable information on this effort.

The results of the committee's survey will be presented by Julie Claussen at the Fisheries Information and Technology Section Symposium, "Social Media in Fisheries" at the annual meeting in Little Rock.

(B) Recommendations:

We recommend that the committee continue its work for another year to accomplish the following:

- ◆ The continued development of an AFS policy on the use of social media that can be adopted and adapted by the various units within the society;
- ◆ Work with the AFS staff, leadership, and the new executive director on a strategy for increasing an online science communication presence for AFS,
- ◆ Develop a strategy to provide communication workshops and how-to guides for use by the various AFS units;
- ◆ Work with the leadership within AFS on ways to expand the use of social media by Units as an effective communication tool.