

# Report to the Governing Board

To: AFS Governing Board

From: Mary C. Fabrizio, President

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AFS is facing several strategic decision-making points that will require vision, information, and careful deliberations: the sale of AFS headquarters property in Bethesda, MD, is imminent; the AFS Strategic Plan will expire in 2009, and our budget continues to provide opportunities for AFS to invest in new initiatives. In addition, we have embarked on the development of a new open-access electronic journal, which we anticipate will begin publication in 2008. My remarks touch upon these activities and on my conviction that AFS will remain relevant and viable in the future only if we adapt our processes and procedures to ensure that we are able to plan for desired future outcomes and respond intelligently to current challenges. Remaining relevant is not an option – it is a necessity.

## *Becoming an Intelligent Association*

Responsive and successful professional associations rely on information to guide decisions. AFS uses this knowledge-based approach to guide the deliberations of the Governing Board; for instance, mid-year and annual reports to the Governing Board are routinely used to guide Board decisions concerning policies and activities of the Society. Although this approach works well for actions and decisions with a short time horizon (say, one or two years), it is not clear that this approach is sufficient to ensure the success of our Society in the future. Changing demographics and evolving technologies shape the environment in which we work, affecting not just how we work, but also how we interact with one another. A key characteristic of associations with a reputation for relevance is the ability to adapt to changing environments. AFS is poised to move beyond being a knowledge-based Society to becoming a Society that sustains and uses knowledge to ensure that members receive products and services of high value. This is known as an intelligent association. Intelligent associations clearly define the outcomes that are desired – in our case, desired outcomes are those that benefit AFS members, and those that benefit fisheries and aquatic resources. Actions of intelligent associations are strategically guided towards achieving these desired outcomes. I will continue working with the Governing Board to ensure that we make progress towards this ideal: we will define who we are (core purpose and values), where we are going (goal for the future), and what we are doing (strategic plan and actions). Surely if we can not answer these questions we can not hope to remain a viable, relevant professional association. Finally, the AFS leadership workshop held at the annual meeting will be restructured to focus on delivering vital information to new AFS leaders. The workshop will emphasize the characteristics of intelligent associations and introduce attendees to these concepts.

## *Strategic Planning for AFS*

To prepare for the revision of the AFS Strategic Plan, I developed a membership survey in coordination with the Membership Concerns Committee, the Publications Overview Committee, the Strategic Planning Committee, and the AFS Officers. The survey was completed in December 2007 and was provided to the contractor for electronic distribution to 1,500 AFS members in spring 2008. Input from the survey will be used to guide the AFS strategic planning process. This will be the first time that the AFS strategic planning process will be informed by contemporary feedback from members about the services they would like, and the direction the members would like AFS to take in the next five years.

## *Transition of AFS Headquarters*

In 2007, I established and appointed a special committee in response to a request from the AFS Executive Director for leadership input to the decision-making process associated with relocation of AFS

headquarters. The process of selling, locating a new home office, and moving is complex and must be guided by external principles, not just financial goals. I directed the transition committee to identify the human resources and society principles that should be used to guide our move. A retreat will be held at the mid-year meeting of the Governing Board to fully disclose and discuss opportunities and challenges associated with this move, and to facilitate Governing Board approval of a course of action.

#### *Electronic Publications*

One of my principal activities in 2007-08 was to set direction and provide leadership for the development of the new open-access AFS journal, including the hiring of the Development Editor and the crafting of an implementation strategy for the journal. To this end, I convened a meeting of leaders from the Publications Overview Committee, the journal editor, and AFS journal production staff in Bethesda, MD, in October 2007 to develop the scope and editorial policy of the new journal. Together with the POC Chair and Executive Director, I drafted a Guide to the Decision-Making Process for the New AFS Journal which describes the roles and responsibilities of the Editor and the POC. Such a guide was necessary because we are using a novel approach for oversight. Appointments to the journal editorial board are currently underway and we expect online publication by August 2008. The journal will be called *Marine and Coastal Fisheries: Dynamics, Management and Ecosystem-based Science*.

#### *Policy Statement on Economic Growth and Fish Conservation*

Working with the Resource Policy Committee and leaders from the Water Quality Section and Socioeconomics Section, I identified three AFS members to revise the policy statement that was returned to the Resource Policy Committee last year. Under the Direction of 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Don Jackson, the *ad hoc* committee has begun to recraft the statement and will prepare to have a statement ready for the 2008 annual meeting.

#### *Annual Meeting Planning*

Another key activity is providing oversight to the committees that host the annual meeting and develop the technical program for the 2008 annual meeting of the Society. The meeting will be held in Ottawa, Canada. I invited three dynamic leaders (ecosystem change, governance models for fisheries management, and natural resource leadership) to address the meeting theme, *Fisheries in Flux: How Do We Ensure Our Sustainable Future?* The theme is an invitation to challenge our thinking about research, management, and stewardship of our aquatic resources. I have also encouraged the development of a new venue for technical presentations, the speed presentation.

#### *Representing AFS*

In December 2007, I attended the North Central Division annual meeting in Madison, WI, and represented AFS at an award ceremony as well as business meetings with the Division Executive Committee. The Executive Director and I also attended a special meeting of the Council of Engineering and Scientific Society Executives in St. Petersburg, FL, in November 2007; this meeting focused on providing leadership tools and training to association Presidents and Executive Directors. The implementation of a strategic board is an outcome of our direct participation in this meeting. In February 2008, I represented AFS at the Advances in Fish Tagging and Marking Technology international symposium in Auckland, New Zealand. This meeting was jointly sponsored by the AFS, the Australian Society for Fish Biology, and the New Zealand Marine Sciences Society.