

# A Brief History of the AFS International Fisheries Section 1987–2016: Past, Current, and Future Bridge-Building

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The precursor of the American Fisheries Society (AFS) International Fisheries Section (IFS) was a Special Committee on AFS Internationalism, which was formed by Past President Cam Stevenson in 1975 to stimulate greater international communication via symposia, joint meetings, and articles in *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society* and *Fisheries* (see Box 1). This committee also considered the feasibility of forming an AFS international subunit, a more inclusive name for the Society, a Mexican chapter, publishing journal abstracts in Spanish and Portuguese, publication donations, sponsoring AFS memberships, and formal liaisons with other professional fisheries societies. In 1986, the Internationalism Special Committee focused on establishing an international fisheries

section, discussing the feasibility of a world fisheries congress, establishing an international fisheries scientist award, and increasing communication with fisheries scientists in developing countries.

The IFS was formed in 1987 to expand and gain recognition for multiple international activities envisioned by Society leaders, with most efforts focused on organizing joint symposia with international scientists (see Box 1), supplying their libraries with books and journals, and encouraging their membership and participation in AFS. Current funding for all Section activities is derived from member dues (US\$5 per year) and the Carl R. Sullivan International Fisheries and Developing Countries Endowment Fund. The Carl R. Sullivan Memorial Membership



AFS Past President Larry Nielsen's keynote address at the 2016 World Fisheries Congress in Busan, South Korea. Nielsen helped spearhead the re-establishment of the World Fisheries Congress in 1992. Photo credit: Michael Miller, Nihon University, Japan.

Fund was established in 1991 to support non-North American AFS memberships, following Sullivan's death. An International Endowment Fund was established in 2001 with contributions from other AFS Sections and the Annual Meeting raffle and supplemented substantially from the 2004 World Fisheries Congress (WFC) proceeds. The International Membership Fund was established in 2004 and (following a motion by Past President Chuck Coutant) initially funded via a challenge grant from the AFS Past Presidents' Advisory Council and many other AFS Units. To facilitate fiscal management, all funds have now been combined (the Carl R. Sullivan Memorial Membership Fund and International Endowment Fund were merged in 2014, followed by the International Membership Fund in 2015) to form the Carl R. Sullivan International Endowment Fund. The fund currently is used to support various international activities, including awards, memberships, and seed money for international symposia and workshops. Only a portion of the interest and dividends from the fund is used in any year; if there is no income, no projects are funded, thereby avoiding depletion

of the principal. See IFS (2016) for information about applying for endowment funds.

In addition to developing an endowment, considerable IFS energy was focused on establishing and supporting a Mexico AFS Chapter. Neil Armantrout authored a detailed Bridge to Mexico plan for IFS and AFS that provided concrete direction for the Society. A 1991 symposium (see Box 1) stimulated a *Directory of Mexican Fisheries Biologists and Ichthyologists* (Hendrickson et al. 1992) with support from the Mexican Ichthyological Society (Sociedad Ictiologica Mexicana) and the National Marine Fisheries Service, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, which in turn facilitated additional collaborative research among U.S. and Mexican scientists and managers. In 1993, IFS organized the Bridge to Mexico program with assistance from several other AFS Units and agencies. As part of that program, IFS proposed establishing an AFS Mexico Chapter, held a scoping meeting at the 1995 AFS Annual Meeting in Tampa, and, along with the Southern Division and Florida Chapter, provided financial assistance for symposia (see Box 1). Further

### Box 1. Major IFS Activities

- 2016. Sponsored Collaborations in Managing and Conserving Large River Basin Fishery Resources and Environment at the Kansas City AFS Annual Meeting
- 2016. Sponsored NoWPaS International Wild Salmonid Research Workshop, Quebec
- 2016. Third International Fisheries Science Prize awarded to Ray Hilborn at the World Fisheries Congress in Busan, Korea
- 2015. Led the elimination of higher AFS membership fees for international scientists (except for those living in developing countries) and the provision for reduced AFS Annual Meeting registration fees for members from developing nations
- 2015. Sponsored Standard Methods for Sampling Freshwater Fishes: Opportunities for International Collaboration at the AFS Portland Annual Meeting
- 2015. Contributed to program planning for the European Inland Fisheries and Aquaculture Advisory Commission's symposium on recreational fishing in Lillehammer, Norway
- 2014. Provided funding and trade show oversight for the Western Division annual meeting in Mazatlan
- 2014. Supported travel for international speakers in three symposia: Dam Impacts on Fishery Resources; Jawless Fishes of the World; and Reproductive Behavior and Recruitment in Marine Fishes at the Quebec City AFS Annual Meeting
- 2013-2015. Supported formal agreements and president exchanges between AFS and the Australian Society for Fisheries Biology, Brazilian Society of Ichthyology, China Society of Fisheries, Fisheries Society of the British Isles, Japanese Society of Fisheries Science, and Korean Society of Fisheries and Aquatic Science
- 2012. Second International Fisheries Science Prize awarded to Ian Cowx at the World Fisheries Congress in Edinburgh, U.K.
- 2009. Sponsored Tag 2008 in Auckland, New Zealand
- 2008. First International Fisheries Science Prize awarded to Kurt Fausch at the World Fisheries Congress in Yokohama, Japan
- 2006. Established the International Fisheries Science Prize
- 2006. AFS Mexico Chapter formed, with support of Western Division and IFS
- 2005. Sponsored Science Bridging Five Nations: The Bering-Aleutian Salmon International Survey with the Genetics Section at the AFS Anchorage Annual Meeting
- 2004-2005. Coordinated AFS Indonesian tsunami relief efforts
- 2004. Co-sponsored the World Fisheries Congress in Vancouver, BC, Canada
- 2004. Established the International (Developing Countries) Membership Fund
- 2004. Proposed reduced membership fees for persons from developing countries
- 2002. Led AFS Governing Board retreat: Devising a Strategy for AFS International Activities: Putting the Pieces Together
- 2001. Established the International Fisheries Endowment Fund
- 2001. Sponsored a variety of Mexican presentations integrated throughout the program at the AFS Phoenix Annual Meeting
- 2000. Sponsored International Conference on Wood in the World's Rivers in Corvallis, Oregon
- 1999. Organized first North America/China symposium for the AFS Charlotte Annual Meeting
- 1997. Sponsored Biology of Fisheries for Sharks in the Mexican-Pacific and Adjacent Areas of the Eastern Pacific Ocean at the AFS Monterey Annual Meeting
- 1995. Sponsored three symposia assisting 75 individuals from Mexico, Cuba, and Central and South America to participate in the AFS Tampa Annual Meeting
- 1993. Sponsored Spotlight on Fisheries Resources of the North Pacific at the AFS Portland Annual Meeting
- 1993. Organized the Bridge to Mexico program to increase interactions among Mexican and other North American fishery scientists
- 1992. Organized State of the World's Fisheries: Report of the World Fisheries Congress at the AFS Rapid City Annual Meeting
- 1992. Led the formation of the first World Fisheries Congress, held in Athens, Greece
- 1992. Completed *Directory of Mexican Fisheries Biologists and Ichthyologists*
- 1991. Established the Sullivan Memorial Membership Award to assist AFS memberships and annual meeting participation by non-North American fishery scientists
- 1991. Sponsored Management of Highly Migratory Atlantic Swordfish and Mexican Fisheries: Exemplary Studies and Opportunities for Collaborations at the AFS San Antonio Annual Meeting
- 1990. Sponsored Pan-Caribbean Fisheries: The Needs and Opportunities for Communication at the AFS Pittsburgh Annual Meeting
- 1988. Organized Fisheries Management in Developing Countries: Problems and Opportunities for the AFS Toronto Annual Meeting
- 1987. International Fisheries Section formed
- 1975. AFS President Cam Stevenson established Special Committee on AFS Internationalism

progress was made at the 2001 AFS Annual Meeting in Phoenix with assistance from the Western Division and the Arizona–New Mexico and California–Nevada chapters (see Box 1). Papers were integrated throughout the program, and the IFS reception was expanded to promote student and professional networking.

Progress toward forming a Mexico Chapter was accelerated by the 2002 AFS Governing Board retreat. Based on this initiative, AFS Past President Ken Beal (2001–2002), IFS Past President Bernard Megrey (2001–2002), and Western Division Past President Eric Knudsen (2001–2002) presented the benefits of joining AFS at the Center for Marine Sciences of the National Polytechnic Institute (Instituto Politecnico Nacional Centro Interdisciplinario de Ciencias Marinas) in La Paz, Mexico. With assistance from Daniel Lluch-Belda and Salvador Lluch-Cota, a total of 28 AFS/IFS memberships were awarded and considerable enthusiasm was generated in establishing an AFS Mexico Chapter within the Western Division. Mauricio Ramirez, president of the newly formed AFS Mexico Chapter, attended the 2006 AFS Annual Meeting in Lake Placid and met with IFS members to develop a long-term strategy for Mexico and Latin America. Initiatives included scheduling Mexican papers in multiple AFS sessions for the AFS 2007 Annual Meeting in San Francisco. Lourdes Rugge and Felipe Amezcua were elected IFS presidents in 2008 and 2010 (see Box 2), respectively, and both continue to play key roles in the Mexico Chapter. The IFS helped with the 2011 Mexico Chapter meeting in Mazatlan, and the Mexico Chapter hosted the 2014 Western Division Annual Meeting in Mazatlan, which was the first AFS Division meeting held outside the United States or Canada. To support international participation, US\$50,000 in Society and AFS Unit travel funds were provided, and the conference featured 441 registrants from 19 nations. The successes of the Mexico Chapter stimulated formation of the Puerto Rico Chapter in

### Box 2. IFS Presidents

1987–1988 Tapan Banerjee  
 1988–1990 Lynn Starnes  
 1990–1991 Vidar Wespestad  
 1991–1993 Gary Sakagawa  
 1993–1995 Neil Armantrout  
 1995–1997 Glen Contreras  
 1997–1999 Craig Harris  
 1999–2000 Glen Contreras  
 2000–2001 Bob Meyer  
 2001–2003 Bern Megrey  
 2003–2006 Doug Beard<sup>a</sup>  
 2006–2008 Dana Schmidt  
 2008–2009 Bruce Ward  
 2009–2011 Lourdes Rugge  
 2011–2013 Felipe Amezcua<sup>b</sup>  
 2013–2014 Carl Burger<sup>c</sup>  
 2014–2015 Bill Franzin<sup>c</sup>  
 2015–2016 Bob Hughes<sup>c</sup>  
 2016–2017 Julie Claussen  
 2017–2018 Steve Cooke

<sup>a</sup>President, World Council of Fisheries Societies, 2012–2016.

<sup>b</sup>Professor, National Autonomous University of Mexico (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México).

<sup>c</sup>Past President, American Fisheries Society.



The 2016 International Fisheries Science Prize was awarded to Ray Hilborn at the 7th World Fisheries Congress in Busan, South Korea. Photo credit: Michael Miller.

2012 with support from IFS and the Southern Division. The Puerto Rico Chapter is scheduled to host the 2018 AFS Southern Division Annual Meeting.

In addition to Chapter formation, international symposia, and travel and membership awards, IFS supports other international activities and exchanges. The IFS, spearheaded by Bern Megrey and Glen Contreras, AFS Past President Larry Nielsen, and other AFS presidents and staff, led the re-establishment of the WFC in Athens, Greece, in 1992, and these congresses have recurred every four years. The IFS co-sponsored the 2004 WFC, and IFS members have served on the International Steering Committees of all congresses. Those congresses and their planning have strengthened relationships with other fisheries societies, particularly the Fisheries Society of the British Isles (FSBI), the Australian Society for Fish Biology, the Japanese Society of Fisheries Science, the China Society of Fisheries, and the Korean Society of Fisheries and Aquatic Science. IFS Past President Doug Beard was a key player in establishing the World Council of Fisheries Societies, which facilitates frequent communication amongst the global societies in addition to ensuring continuation of the WFCs.

The IFS endowment is used to fund two major awards. The first is the International Fisheries Science Prize, awarded at each WFC ([international.fisheries.org/section-activities/international-fisheries-prize](http://international.fisheries.org/section-activities/international-fisheries-prize)). The prize was initiated in 2006, under the guidance of 2006–2008 IFS President Dana Schmidt, and includes a medal and US\$5,000 award. The 2016 prize was cosponsored by AFS, the Australian Society for Fish Biology, FSBI, IFS, and the Japanese Society of Fisheries Science, and each organization was represented on the nominee evaluation committee. The second award is the Student Fellowship Exchange between the annual meetings of AFS and FSBI ([international.fisheries.org/section-activities/fsbi-exchange-program](http://international.fisheries.org/section-activities/fsbi-exchange-program)). In these exchanges, the host funds the student's registration and per diem, and FSBI or IFS funds the transportation. The fellow nominee evaluation committee is composed of the three most recent fellows. Past Fellows are Shane Vatland (current IFS secretary), Steven Midway, Patrick Cooney, Zachary Penny, Jeremy Higgs, and Charlie Waters.

To further international exchanges of fisheries science professionals, the IFS supported establishing formal agreements and exchanges between AFS presidents and six other professional fish and fishery societies in 2013–2015 (see Box 1). Similar to the student exchanges, the host society funds the president's registration and lodging and the president's member society funds the transportation. Such exchanges increase understanding and insights among the society leadership and lead to collaborative publications and governance. In 2015, IFS President Bill Franzin instituted an Advisory Board to increase discussions of matters of global concern and fisheries topics that are pertinent to other nations. Currently, IFS Advisory Board members reside in Australia, Brazil, China, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa, and Switzerland.

The IFS continues to make AFS a more welcoming society for international delegates and authors of journal manuscripts. In 2013, IFS officers developed an international welcoming letter designed to help promote international hospitality and address the informational needs of delegates from other nations attending AFS Annual Meetings. The letter is sent to all registrants outside Canada and the United States. In 2016, IFS reinstated its English editing service for authors of journal manuscripts for whom English is a second language. In this program, volunteer editors consisting of IFS fisheries scientists

provide editorial help with the challenges of peer-review publishing for international scientists. AFS and IFS members have priority for the service, as do authors planning to submit to AFS journals. Our first request came from a Ph.D. student in Turkey. If you would like more information on serving as a volunteer editor or requesting manuscript assistance please contact Julie Claussen ([juliec@illinois.edu](mailto:juliec@illinois.edu)).

In summary, the AFS International Fisheries Section offers many opportunities for networking with international colleagues, expanding minds culturally and scientifically, and furthering the AFS mission globally. In doing so, it collaborates with annual meeting coordinators, other societies and institutions, other AFS Units, and the Society leadership to maximize opportunities for international interactions. Plans for future work and programs include showcasing international success stories in fisheries research and management; facilitating partnerships between AFS members or Units and international members needing assistance with technology, techniques, research design, and data analyses; promoting and sponsoring international continuing education, webinars, and workshops; instituting an AFS membership sponsorship program for international members where difficulties exist in sending money; and providing an online forum to discuss international fisheries issues of concern. For those of you still wondering why you should join IFS, please see Hughes et al. (2014, 2016), Hughes and Kaufmann (2014), and Winfield et al. (2016) for examples. Further information about IFS can be found at [international.fisheries.org](http://international.fisheries.org). Our business meetings and socials are typically held on Tuesdays at AFS Annual Meetings. Come join us for a little international diversity. We welcome everyone as a member, and if you would like to make a tax-deductible donation to our endowment fund, please contact IFS Treasurer Danielle Reich ([neemad@gmail.com](mailto:neemad@gmail.com)).

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