In this issue: President’s Hook, upcoming WDAFS meeting updates, Committee updates, small project grants and more...

President: Laurie Earley  
President-Elect: Eric Fetherman  
Vice President: Julie Carter  
Past-President: Dan Brauch  
Sec.-Treasurer: Laura Burckhardt  
Student Representative: Jack McLaren  
Tributary Editor: Timothy D’Amico
Hello Western Division! It is amazing to think that we're nearing the end of 2022 and the first several months of my presidency have passed. The transition of the new Division ofﬁcers happened at the end of August during the Spokane meeting. We welcomed Julie Carter as the new Vice President, and Jack McLaren as the Student Representative. I’m very excited for the opportunity to work with them both and I appreciate their desire to serve the Division and assist with fulfilling the Society and Division’s mission.

That statement about the ‘desire to serve’ is something I would like to explore a bit more. Over the last several months, there have been discussions in a variety of forums, from the APS Management Committee to the Division Executive Committee, from conversations with Division Committee Chairs and Chapter ofﬁcers, there has been this common theme. This being, that there are seemingly less and less people volunteering to serve as ofﬁcers or on committees within the various units of the Society. This makes it difﬁcult for many Chapters and for the Division to complete annual activities and ultimately provide opportunities to members.

As we are all know, it’s very easy to point our ﬁngers at the pandemic. I’ll admit, it was hard to ﬁnd the separation between work and life when everything was under one roof and you only left the house to go walk the dog, get yard work done, or go for a bike ride. So, I decide to do a little digging. By no means did I complete an exhaustive literature search, but I did read several articles related to COVID-19 and professional societies. During my reading I found a couple little nuggets that I would like to share for your consideration. One editorial reiterated some information we already know regarding the pandemic’s impact on professional meetings, but offered that professional societies need to adapt and evolve and not to go back to the way it was previously (Evens 2020). Which is one area where I think the Division should focus but requires input from our members, including how we can better improve engagement in a post-pandemic society. Another article found that there was a drop in participation within professional societies but showed that those who continued their involvement reported less anxiety and depression during the pandemic (Rubacava et al. 2022). Although this ﬁnding was within surgical societies, it does indicate that other professional societies saw reduced participation but shows how these organizations provide a sense of community which many of missed during the pandemic. Unfortunately, none of the articles I found evaluated the question about bandwidth and volunteering, but I will continue to track this topic and see if there are any additional lessons from the pandemic.

In regards to my level of service, I recently had to take a step back and reﬂect on my reasoning to serve as an ofﬁcer. Earlier this summer, in the midst of the excitement associated with the Spokane Meeting planning, I accepted a new position that eventually would relocate my family and I back to my home state of Vermont. There was a lot to be jazzed about, including being closer to family and friends and starting a new position with new set of responsibilities. But it wasn’t an easy decision because it meant that I was leaving the West, a place that I called home for more than 18 years, and a job I loved. Even more challenging was the fact I would begin my new position right as I started my Presidency. In the end, I determined that I made a commitment to serve as an ofﬁcer and that I would complete my term. Certainly, there has been some juggling and days where I reconsider whether I made the right decision, but it always returns to how serving is one way for me to give back to the profession I love. Maybe it’s the holiday season that has my mind on giving back or maybe it’s just a good opportunity for me to pose this challenge to you all. Whether you consider becoming more engaged with the Society, through a Chapter, Division, Section, or Committee, ﬁnd ways to mentor less experienced colleagues, ﬁnd opportunities to expose the profession to younger generations, or consider being a Hutton Mentor, I ask that you all think about ways you can give back to the Fisheries profession.

Lastly, I would like to provide a brief update on some Division business. I’m happy to share that we were able to host an Executive Committee (ExCom) mid-year meeting. We held the meeting in Boise, which afforded the opportunity for Division ofﬁcers to meet with Idaho Chapter ofﬁcers and discuss Annual Meeting planning and conduct a site visit of the Boise Centre. It definitely got me excited about the upcoming
meeting in May 2023. It will be in a great location, and we already have a great plenary session in the works. I hope you all consider attending!

The mid-year meeting also provided the opportunity for the majority of the ExCom to spend time together and have a daylong meeting to discuss Division business. This was the first time in 3 years that the mid-year meeting was in-person, and wow, it felt great to be together and allowed for some very productive discussions. We also had (virtual) representation from the newly formed Pacific Islands Chapter and the Division is looking forward assisting with their efforts to develop a student sub-unit and get their first round of officers voted in. I want to thank all the Chapter officers who traveled or participated in the meeting from afar. It was a highlight to my fall adventures.

One topic that was discussed during the mid-year meeting was related to the breaching of the Snake River dams. During the August WDAFS ExCom meeting in Spokane, the Division was requested to revisit the issue. The Division passed a resolution in 2011 and with the recent work from the Division’s Resource Policy and Environmental Concerns Committee (RPECC), it was requested that a policy statement be drafted. Working with members of RPECC committee and AFS’s policy team, a new policy statement was drafted this fall. During the mid-year retreat, the ExCom worked to ensure edits were incorporated from the various chapters. Taking the revised statement, the WA/BC chapter shared with their membership and conducted a survey. Per those results, the Chapter decided to abstain from voting on whether the Division should sign onto the statement. Even with that abstention, the Division proceeded with supporting the statement. This was not an easy process and I think the topic of where we draw the line between advocacy and science will continue to be debated. The final statement can be found later in the newsletter.

Thanks for your time and I hope everyone can find some time to enjoy the holiday season and best wishes in the New Year!

Citations:
The Western Division and the Idaho Chapter of the American Fisheries Society invite you to join us in Boise, Idaho, May 8-11, 2023.

This year’s theme, “Managing Aquatic Ecosystems and Shifting Baselines: Challenges and Opportunities” will provide a forum to explore the Resist-Accept-Direct framework and applying this approach to aquatic ecosystems in the face of climate change.

**SYMPOSIA IDEAS ARE BEING ACCEPTED!**
Symposium proposals should include a title, organizer(s) contact information, a point of contact, intended symposia length (1 time block = 5-6 talks, half day session = 10-12 talks, or full day session = approximately 20 talks), and a brief description of the session/abstract (no more than 200 words). Symposium proposals will be accepted through January 15, 2023 and can be sent to mike.peterson@idfg.idaho.gov.

We invite you to submit a film and/or photograph, to be showcased as part of the **2023 Aquatic Film and Photography Festival**. The festival will run during the 2023 WDAFS Annual Meeting. Applications are due March 1, 2023, with final film and photo files uploaded by March 15, 2023. Complete details at: [https://afsannualmeeting.fisheries.org/2023-aquatic-film-and-photography-festival/](https://afsannualmeeting.fisheries.org/2023-aquatic-film-and-photography-festival/)

If You Are Interested in Sponsoring, Donating, or Participating in the Tradeshow, please contact: Dan Brauch at danbrauchafs@gmail.com

Aquatic Film and Photo Festival Submission Invitation

The Western Division American Fisheries Society (WDAFS) and The Idaho Chapter of AFS (ICAJS) invite you to submit an aquatically oriented film and/or photograph, to be showcased as part of the WDAFS 2023 Aquatic Film and Photography Festival. This film and photography festival will occur during the WDAFS Meeting in Boise, ID, May 8-11, 2023 (https://www.idahoafs.org/2023/index.php).

To accommodate organizational needs, film submission forms are due March 1, 2023 to secure a tentative spot in the festival and final film and photography submissions are needed by March 15, 2023.

** Film and photography submissions may be used in promotion of the conference (e.g., publication and film festival trailer).

** Film submissions must:

Focus on aquatic themes (freshwater, estuarine, and marine) that advance our understanding, appreciation, and management of aquatic ecosystems. This could include films that showcase beauty, science, restoration, and management. Of particular interest are films that address the meeting theme of “Managing Aquatic Ecosystems and Shifting Baselines: Challenges and Opportunities”

Be less than 30 minutes in length - preference will be given to shorter films (ideally 10 minutes or less) to allow for more films to be included in the festival.

Be downloadable to conference organizers online or via vimeo.com.

Participants are limited to three film submissions but priority will be given to films that provide an opportunity for more individuals to present their work.

** Deadlines:

Completed submission form is due on March 1, 2023.

Final cut film submissions with web links are due no later than March 15, 2023.

As long as organizers can access the films online to facilitate the jury selection process, videos do not need to be uploaded to Vimeo and available for download at this time.

If you have any questions please contact Dan Brauch at danbrauchafs@gmail.com or by phone at (970) 497-9722.

Jury-selected best films will be played during a dedicated film festival event during the conference. Jury- and audience-selected best films will be recognized after completion of the conference.

Film Submission Form (send no later than March 1, 2023 to danbrauchafs@gmail.com):

Film Contact First and Last Name:

Film Contact Organization:

Film Contact Member Type, Student or Professional (if applicable):

Film Contact Email:

Film Contact Web address (if applicable):

Film Name:

Film Description (200 words or less):

Film length:

Permanent URL for film to be shared in the festival program (if applicable):

Upload film to Vimeo – If your film is selected, you will be asked to upload your film to Vimeo so that it can be accessed and downloaded by the festival organizers prior to the event. If you don’t already have an account on www.vimeo.com, begin by signing up (it’s free!). Using this platform’s uploading service, upload your finished film and share the link in your submission form (above). The link should look something like this: www.vimeo.com/82813271. You must change the privacy settings so that we are able to download your submission. To do this, scroll below your downloaded video and description and click the ‘settings’ button. Select the ‘privacy’ tab and scroll to where it says ‘What Can People Do With This Video’ and select ‘Download The Video’. By following these steps, Vimeo will compress your video and allow us to easily watch and download your film for the festival. Once your film has been downloaded we will let you know so you can change the privacy setting on Vimeo or delete it upon your preference. Please send an email to Dan Brauch danbrauchafs@gmail.com with your Vimeo link details.
Aquatic Film and Photo Festival Submission Invitation

Photo Submissions
Photos – High-resolution photographs with aquatic themes can be emailed directly to Dan Brauch danbrauchafs@gmail.com by March 15, 2023. Aquatic themes can include riverscapes, oceans, estuaries, underwater biota and scenes, fish activities, science activities, management activities, etc. Photographs will be viewable by WDAFS meeting attendees in a slide show as part of the film festival; photos will not be individually posted on the meeting website or available for download or use beyond the meeting. In addition, select photographs may be shown opportunistically throughout the conference. The best photographs will receive awards and be recognized during the conference. In addition, top photos will be printed on wrapped canvas, displayed during the film festival, and offered in the silent auction to raise funds for AFS programs.

Photographers may submit between 1-10 photographs. The following information should accompany each photograph and should be provided at the time of photo submission.

Photographer's name:
Photographer's Member Type, Student or Professional (if applicable):
Photograph title (should include fish name and location taken if appropriate):
Photograph purpose (What is the purpose or story of the image? For example, purposes may be to increase awareness of a certain topic or to show the beauty of underwater life):

Filenames of the photographs should include the last name of the photographer and a short title of the image. Files should be .jpg format.

If you have any questions about photo submissions please contact Dan Brauch danbrauchafs@gmail.com.

Call for Award Nominations

Western Division AFS awards to Individuals, Organizations, Chapters, and Student Subunits

Each year, the Western Division bestows awards on individuals and entities who have distinguished themselves through their contributions to fisheries education, science, management, and conservation. All of us know people who are deserving of recognition. Please consider nominating a worthy person or group for one of the WDAFS awards listed below. Nominations are due February 24, 2023 and WDAFS will select award winners and notify nominees of the outcome no later than April 1, 2023. Award winners will be announced in AFS' Fisheries magazine and online through AFS and WDAFS social media. Their accomplishments will be highlighted in the WDAFS newsletter (The Tributary), and they will be publicly recognized and awarded a plaque at the 2023 WDAFS annual meeting hosted by the Idaho Chapter in Boise, ID May 8-11, 2023. Award winners are encouraged but not required to attend the annual meeting.

For more information, including nomination instructions and the names of past award recipients, please visit the WDAFS website: https://wdafs.org/awards/

AWARDS GIVEN TO INDIVIDUALS

Award of Excellence – This award recognizes sustained professional excellence; it is the most prestigious award offered by the Division. It is given annually to an AFS member who has demonstrated outstanding achievement and exceptional competence in fishery resource applications through monumental works, new methodologies, or multiple successful contributions that benefit our resources and profession.

Award of Merit – This award is given to AFS member(s) who have made positive and regionally significant contributions to the Western Division, to our profession, and to fisheries resources.

Award of Special Recognition – WDAFS gives this award to an AFS member or non-member (or, alternatively, to an organization) whose actions have directly benefited the Western Division and its members.

Robert Borovicka Conservation Achievement Award
# Call for WDAFS Graduate Student Scholarships

Graduate Student scholarship available! The Western Division is pleased to announce that applications for its graduate-level student scholarships are now being solicited. The Eugene Maughan Graduate Student Scholarship fund provides up to $5,000 annually to masters or doctoral students in the general area of fisheries science with one to three awards to individual students. Click here for more information on Dr. Gene Maughan. An award committee of five fisheries scientists from the Western Division will make the decision regarding the award of scholarships.

Selection criteria include demonstration of:

- Excellent scholarship as evidenced by coursework during graduate studies.
- Potential for future contributions to the fisheries profession through management, research, or teaching.
- Significant progress toward attaining a graduate degree in fisheries science with a defined thesis or dissertation project.

Scholarship Applications are due February 24, 2023. The 2023 scholarships will be awarded at the 2023 WDAFS Annual Meeting in Boise, Idaho May 8-11, 2023 (exact date/time TBD). For more information, including application instructions, please visit the WDAFS website: https://wdafs.org/students/scholarship-travel-award-information/

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# Call for Award Nominations

- This award is presented to an AFS member or non-member who has significantly contributed to fisheries conservation within the geographic region of the Western Division.

Diversity and Inclusion Awards – The WDAFS Diversity & Inclusion Committee presents the Diversity & Inclusion Service Award to an AFS member who has demonstrated service to supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion in fisheries and the Diversity & Inclusion Mentorship Award to an AFS member or non-member who is interested in further developing their diversity, equity, and inclusion leadership skills, especially towards promoting involvement in fisheries.

AWARDS GIVEN TO ORGANIZATIONS

WDAFS gives awards to several government and non-government entities each year in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the conservation of fisheries, aquatic, and riparian resources, to AFS, and to its members. We welcome nominations of organizations, including local, state, and federal government agencies, tribes, non-profit organizations, private businesses, committees, and other entities for the awards described below. A nomination can identify more than one organization that worked on a single project, but only one entity can be named to receive the award.

Award of Special Recognition – This award is given to an organization (as defined above) whose actions have directly benefited the Western Division and its members. Individuals (AFS member or non-member) are also eligible for this award.

Conservation Achievement Award – This award is presented to an organization (as defined above) for their efforts to promote the conservation, development, and wise use of fisheries resources within the geographical region of the western United States that comprises the Western Division.

Excellence in Riparian Management Award – Also known as the Riparian Challenge Award, this award recognizes organizations that have restored riparian systems along lakes, streams, and wetlands in the geographical region of the western United States that comprises the Western Division. Each year, WDAFS gives an award to the implementer of an outstanding riparian project in each of the following categories: (1) U.S. Forest Service (USFS) projects; (2) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) projects; and (3) projects completed by entities other than the USFS and BLM.

CHAPTER AND SUBUNIT AWARDS

Each year, the Western Division of the American Fisheries Society recognizes the large chapter, small chapter, and student subunit that best exemplify a commitment to the mission of the Society by actively working to achieve the goals set forth in the AFS Strategic Plan. We encourage you to nominate your chapter or student subunit for these awards.
Call for 2023 WDAFS Travel Grants

The Western Division and the Idaho Chapter of The American Fisheries Society will be hosting the 2023 Western Division Annual Meeting. The Western Division is pleased to offer travel grants to help with registration and travel assistance to attend the meeting, which will be held in Boise, Idaho May 8-11, 2023. Applications will be received until February 24, 2023.

The grant categories are the following:

- Student
- Early Career Professionals (graduated in the last five years)
- Professionals
- Emeritus
- International Members
- Indigenous/Tribal Members
- Diversity and Inclusion Mentorship

Requirements for WDAFS Travel Awards:

Current Society and WDAFS membership required (exception given to the Indigenous/Tribal Member Diversity and Inclusion Mentorship categories). You will be asked to provide your AFS membership number. Applicants will be ranked on the following criteria:

1. Applicants who plan to actively participate at the 2023 annual meeting. This can include presenting an oral or poster presentation, assisting the planning committee, moderating a session, etc.
2. Applicants who are active (or interested in becoming active) in a sub-unit, Chapter, Western Division, or the Society.
3. Applicants who indicate a strong interest in fisheries, oceans, aquatic science and management.

International only: Applicants must reside outside the United States. If you reside outside of WDAFS boundaries, Provinces of British Columbia and the Yukon Territory in Canada, Mexico, or U.S. associated entities in the Eastern Pacific Ocean, please contact Doug Austen (dausten@fisheries.org) and request to become a Western Division member.

Indigenous/Tribal Member: Those who self-identify as being American Indian, Alaska Native, First Nation, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander. Preference will be given to Society and WDAFS members, but membership is not required and award will cover non-member registration.

For more information and to apply for the Student, Early Career Professional, Professional, Emeritus, International Member, and Indigenous/Tribal Member travel grants, please visit our website.

Additionally, the WDAFS Diversity and Inclusion Committee offers a Diversity and Inclusion Mentorship travel grant. The nomination process for this travel grant can be found in this issue as well as on the Diversity and Inclusion Award and Travel Grant page of our website.

Call for WDAFS Small Project Grants

The WDAFS is currently accepting applications for funding of small fisheries-related projects in the western United States, US territories, Mexico, and Canadian provinces represented by the WDAFS. Grants are usually modest, averaging less than $1,000, but can help get a project started or be used to supplement funding from other sources.

Applications must be emailed to WDAFS Past President Dan Brauch at danbrauchafs@gmail.com no later than February 1, 2023.

Funding Priorities

Projects that further the mission and strategic objectives of the American Fisheries Society and the Western Division will be targeted for Small Project Grant funding. AFS’ mission is to improve the conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting the development of fisheries professionals. The Western Division endeavors to provide a forum for exchanging technical and policy information, promote understanding by regional, federal, and state policy-makers of the nature and extent of fishery matters of concern to the membership, fa-
WDAFS Small Project Grants

Facilitate timely exchange of information to chapters and the general membership, and provide a vehicle for the active participation of individual members in Society business and professional activities.

The Executive Committee will consider the following project elements when making grants funding decisions. Does the proposal:

- Promote the AFS mission and WDAFS objectives? Please also refer to the AFS Strategic Plan, available on the AFS website.
- Incorporate and promote science-based management, conservation, or understanding of fisheries resources?
- Elevate the visibility of fisheries issues to a broad audience?
- Need WDAFS funding to complete the project?
- Have potential for generating revenue that would benefit the WDAFS?

Application Instructions

An AFS member or a Student Sub-unit must submit the application. Applications must be received via email no later than February 1, 2023 for consideration. Applications over 3 pages in length will be disqualified (at a minimum, use 1-inch page margins and 11 pt font). All of the information requested below must be included in the application:

- Project title
- Name of AFS member or Student Subunit seeking funding
- Applicant’s AFS member number
- Name, address, phone number, and email address of one or more contacts
- Project description (limit to 1 page). Describe how the project aligns with and furthers AFS’s mission and WDAFS’ objectives.
- General project timeline, including estimated time to completion
- Total estimated project cost, amount of funding requested from WDAFS, and amount of funding provided by other entities (identify sources).
- Disposition of unused funds

Typically, small project grant awards cannot be used for travel (mileage or per diem) except in special situations. If your application budget includes travel funds, please contact the Committee Chair below to find out if they may be covered by the award.

The WDAFS Executive Committee will review applications, select grantees, and notify applicants of their decision by March 1, 2023. Again, in order to realize the greatest value from limited WDAFS resources, projects addressing AFS goals and objectives, those with high visibility, and those with a greater positive impact on fisheries resources will be given priority. The number and amount of funds provided to grantees is contingent on funding priorities and the availability of funds. We reserve the right to offer a grant amount that is different than that requested. Payment will be by check.

The WDAFS is a tax-exempt non-profit organization dedicated to the professional advancement of its members and the conservation and wise use of the fisheries resource. Anyone wishing to donate to the WDAFS Small Project Grants fund is urged to contact WDAFS Past President Dan Brauch at danbrauchafs@gmail.com.
# Upcoming 2023 Chapter Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AZ/NM</td>
<td>Feb. 2—4, 2023</td>
<td>Farmington, NM</td>
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<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Feb. 21—24, 2023</td>
<td>Butte, MT</td>
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<tr>
<td>UT</td>
<td>Feb 27—Mar. 1, 2023</td>
<td>St. George, UT</td>
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<tr>
<td>OR</td>
<td>Feb. 28—Mar. 2, 2023</td>
<td>Eugene, OR</td>
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<tr>
<td>CO/WY</td>
<td>Feb 28—Mar. 3, 2023</td>
<td>Fort Collins, CO</td>
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<tr>
<td>AK</td>
<td>Mar 27—31, 2023</td>
<td>Fairbanks, AK (Hybrid)</td>
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<tr>
<td>CA/NV</td>
<td>Mar 1—3, 2023</td>
<td>Long Beach, CA</td>
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<tr>
<td>WA/BC</td>
<td>Mar. 20—22, 2023</td>
<td>Bellingham, WA</td>
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<tr>
<td>ID/WDAFS</td>
<td>May 8—11, 2023</td>
<td>Boise, ID</td>
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<td>No Meeting Scheduled</td>
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**WDAFS MISSION/VISION STATEMENTS**

**WDAFS MISSION:** The mission of the Western Division of the American Fisheries Society is to: 1) improve the conservation and sustainability of unique fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems in western North America by advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting the development of fisheries professionals, and 2) serving as an effective bridge between the Society and Chapters within the Western Division, promoting communication among and support of the Chapters and membership, and being the American Fisheries Society’s representative to the public in western North America.

**WDAFS VISION:** The Western Division of the American Fisheries Society seeks to be recognized as the preeminent organization providing fisheries information to decision makers in all arenas of western North America. While fulfilling our vision, we will recruit and develop new fisheries professionals by offering learning and training opportunities crucial to maintaining a well-trained profession, support programs and efforts to increase diversity and inclusion, and enhance the value of American Fisheries Society professional certification.

**WDAFS SLOGAN:** Advancing fisheries and aquatic science and professionals in western North America.

**WDAFS CHALLENGE:** Ignorance of fisheries and aquatic ecosystems is our arch enemy. We will fight against ignorance by communicating science to other scientists, decision makers, influencers, and the Public, and we will advocate for conducting and using science to achieve sound management and policy decisions. We will expose suppression and misuse of science and enhance scientific credibility by attempting to maintain purity of the scientific enterprise. It is our hope that elevating science will help influencers and decision makers to achieve what is best for current and future generations.

**WDAFS COMMITTEE UPDATES**

**Resource, Policy & Environmental Concerns Committee**

Bob Hughes (WDAFS Resource, Policy, & Environmental Concerns Committee)

In the spring of 2021, the RPECC drafted a letter for mailing to the Pacific Northwest Congressional delegation in support of breaching the 4 lower Snake River dams. Because the WDAFS ExCom was unable to approve that letter, the RPECC formed an expert committee to evaluate the fisheries science behind breaching those dams. The RPECC expert committee then decided to submit its evaluation as a review-manuscript to Water Biology & Security, where it was published in March 2022. Concurrently, the RPECC co-organized and held 2 special sessions focused on dam breaching policy at the 2022 AFS annual meeting in Spokane. Following the AFS annual meeting, the WDAFS reviewed and approved a revised statement on lower Snake River dam breaching at its fall retreat. The next order of business for the RPECC is to organize a special session on non-permanent streams and rivers for the 7-11 May 2023 WDAFS annual meeting in Boise. If interested in contributing as a presenter or organizer, please contact us.

**Western Native Fishes Committee**

Timothy D’Amico & Luke Schultz (WDAFS Western Native Fishes Committee)

The WNFC is looking to expand! As a WDAFS special committee, the WNFC is interested in increasing committee involvement with WDAFS members and potentially moving forward with some new tasks. Our previous work included updating a repository for native fish literature and distributions, co-authoring sections of the revised book on Cutthroat Trout taxonomy, and bringing the Salvelinus confluentus Curiosity Society into the WDAFS as a part of the WNFC. As always, the WNFC will continue to host our annual Native Fishes Symposium at the upcoming 2023 WDAFS meeting in Boise, ID. If you are interested in becoming part of our committee or presenting in our symposium, don’t hesitate to reach out to us. We look forward to bringing new folks into the group.
Call for ECP Committee Members!
We are looking for new members to join the Early Career Professional Committee for the 2022-23 year! Being a part of this committee would entail planning the ECP social in Boise in 2023, planning upcoming webinars and continuing education, and helping us reach out to more diverse aquatic communities in the Western Division.

Develop workshops to educate ECPs about careers and skills.
Create mentoring opportunities by introducing ECPs to scientists.
Assist ECPs with finding employment in fishery sciences or related work.

Please contact us if you are interested in joining the ECP Committee at ecpchair@wdafs.org

Mission
The mission of the Early Career Professional Committee is to promote the education and professional development of ECPs who graduated with the past five years. The committee focuses on the following goals to support its mission:
Encourage ECPs of all backgrounds to attend WDAFS conferences.
The Columbia River ecosystem was once a network of complex, interconnected habitats that supported the most prolific salmon habitat in the world. Its Snake River basin once supported nearly fifty percent of the Chinook salmon and steelhead in the entire Columbia River Basin. Now, decades after their initial Endangered Species Act listings, native fish populations in the Snake River basin including salmon, migratory trout, sturgeon, lamprey, and others have not recovered, and many are alarmingly low and trending towards extinction. The once free-flowing river has been transformed into reservoirs by a series of dams that impede the movement of these fishes and greatly decreases their survival. The four dams on the lower Snake River (Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, and Lower Granite) significantly reduce access to the cold-water, high-quality spawning and nursery habitat that are essential for fish sustainability (Storch et al. 2022).

When the body of scientific evidence is considered (Williams et al., 1989; Nehlsen et al., 1991; Thurow, 2000; NOAA, 2017, 2022; Isaak et al. 2018; Storch et al. 2022; TU, 2022), it is clear that breaching the four lower Snake River dams is necessary to (1) substantially improve the probability of recovering these cultural and ecological keystone species to healthy and harvestable populations and (2) safeguard those fishes from extinction.

Salmon and other anadromous fish move between the upriver spawning and rearing habitats and the ocean and back again. Today, only 1-2% of historic wild salmon and steelhead numbers return to the Snake River to spawn above the four lower dams. Climate change has (NWPCC 2015; Storch et al. 2022) and will continue to worsen the outlook for these coldwater species. Access to this habitat is the best opportunity to promote broad-scale population recovery and persistence in the face of climate-change induced warming.

Restoring healthy and harvestable salmon and steelhead populations will require a change in approach. Since the 1980s, many fisheries recovery strategies (e.g., supplementing with hatchery-raised fish, transporting fish, fish passage improvements, and rehabilitation habitat) have been attempted with little or no success. Despite spending billions on recovery, these species continue to decline, affecting both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, other imperiled species, tribal rights, and commercial and recreational fishing.

Scientific studies continue to show that breaching the four lower Snake River dams would provide greater certainty of achieving long-term survival and recovery of native wild fishes more than any other measure or combination of measures without dam breaching. Breaching the dams to restore riverine habitats in the lower Snake River will also benefit ecosystem processes, entire biological communities, and increase climate change resilience of anadromous fishes. Dam breaching has shown success towards recovering migratory fish species, notably in the Elwha River, WA (Hess et al. 2020; Storch et al. 2022) and Kennebec and Penobscot rivers, ME (Johnston et al. 2019; Kober 2019; Prosek 2020; Sharma and Waldman 2021; Wippelhauser 2021; NRCM 2022). Notably, the Penobscot River project was accomplished by a combination of breaching, fish passageways, and increased power production for different dams, such that total hydropower production was maintained while restoring diadromous fish runs.

Although the 4 lower Snake River dams and reservoirs provide hydroelectric energy for western states, irrigation water for agriculture, and allow commercial navigation to move grain and other goods efficiently, they have led to significant declines in fish populations. The best available science suggests that a significant portion of the lower Snake River must be returned to a free-flowing condition to restore Snake River salmon populations. Proposals to breach the four lower Snake River dams have a long history, but the subject has become more critical as these iconic fish populations approach extinction. The WDAFS unanimously passed a resolution in 2011 and a subsequent letter to Oregon Governor Kate Brown in 2020 saying that breaching these dams will be required if these runs are to be recovered. Likewise, U.S. Representatives Simpson (R.-Idaho) and
Blumener (D-Ore.) have proposed breaching these dams while also addressing the needs of stakeholders and tribal rightsholders who depend on the river. In summer 2022, Washington Governor Jay Inslee and Senator Patty Murray (D-Wash.) released a final report for the government to move forward to provide replacements of these dams’ benefits (e.g., wind and solar power production and railway transportation of goods [SOS 2022]), so that breaching is a credible pathway for policymakers to consider. The Biden Administration is also working to develop a comprehensive salmon restoration plan to settle longstanding litigation with Tribes, the state of Oregon, and conservation organizations.

If Snake River basin salmon and steelhead are to be saved, then policymakers and stakeholders at all levels will need to implement appropriate processes and funding provisions to breach the four dams on the Lower Snake River, as well as implement all necessary habitat rehabilitation. There are other services that must be accounted for if dam breaching were to occur. Dam removals often take decades of comprehensive planning and implementation, and replacing those services provided by the dams will also take time. This will require Congress, the Biden Administration, regional rightsholders, and stakeholders, to negotiate an agreement soon for the dam removal to proceed expeditiously.

The AFS represents over 7,500 professional fishery scientists and resource managers across the world. The WDAFS includes US states west of the Mississippi River basin and Pacific Canada. Our common mission is to improve the conservation and sustainability of fishery resources and aquatic ecosystems by (1) advancing fisheries and aquatic science and (2) promoting the development of fisheries professionals. Our members represent a holistic array of fishery experts who are employed in academia, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private consulting.

References


NWPC (Northwest Power and Conservation Council).
Statement of the American Fisheries Society (AFS) and the Western Division AFS (WDAFS) About the Need to Breach the Four Dams on the Lower Snake River

Formally adopted by WDAFS December 2022 and awaiting AFS approval


Thurow, R.F., 2000. Dynamics of Chinook Salmon populations within Idaho’s Frank

WDAFS SMALL PROJECT GRANTS

Using environmental DNA to assess spatiotemporal variation in Arctic grayling and Chinook salmon throughout the Chena River

Kristen Reece, University of Alaska Fairbanks
Maggie Harings, University of Alaska Fairbanks
Dr. J. Andrés López, University of Alaska Fairbanks

Chinook salmon (Oncorhynchus tshawytscha) have been declining in the Chena River, Alaska since the 2010’s, with the lowest run on record reported in 2022. The impact of this decline on their ecological relationship with Arctic grayling (Thymallus arcticus), however, is not well understood. We are using environmental DNA (eDNA) to assess spatiotemporal variation in Arctic grayling abundances throughout Chinook salmon spawning grounds on the Chena River spanning the period of adult salmon migration. This project leverages Chinook salmon count data produced during a larger Yukon River Basin salmon eDNA study that were collected in partnership with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG). This project also aims to provide critical field and laboratory training as well as foundational data analysis skills and networking opportunities for an undergraduate student as she considers future career opportunities. At the University of Alaska’s (UA) Museum of the North, we are developing and implementing several eDNA studies relying on species-specific qPCR assays. For this specific study, we filtered eDNA samples from seven sites in the Chena River during three sampling events in June, July, and September of 2022 that coincided with periods of time before, during and after the Chinook salmon run, respectively. At present, we are isolating DNA from filtered samples and using data from preliminary qPCRs to assess the efficacy of species-specific
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assays for Chinook salmon and Arctic grayling. These assays will be employed this winter to determine eDNA concentrations of Chinook salmon and Arctic grayling found on each filter. In turn, we will make ecological inferences from trends in spatiotemporal variations in Chinook salmon and Arctic grayling eDNA concentrations. This glimpse into changes in eDNA concentrations of Arctic grayling throughout space and time will provide a preliminary look at variation of species presence in the context of the low-ever Chinook salmon abundance ever recorded for the Chena River. Our findings will be presented in March at both the 2023 Alaska Chapter American Fisheries Society Conference and the The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) Center for One Health Research International Conference. We intend to incorporate lessons learned from this preliminary study into educational activities we host at the 2023 Henshaw Creek Science and Culture Camp, a remote one-week camp facilitating indigenous youth engagement and education promoting stewardship and traditional knowledge.

Undergraduate Perspective: Kristen Reece

My undergraduate research began in January 2022 as a nontraditional student with Iḷisaġvik College, Alaska’s only tribal college, as part of the BLaST Undergraduate Research Experience program at UAF. I was fortunate to have been chosen to work in the Ichthyology and Molecular Genetics Laboratories with Dr. J. Andrés López and Fisheries Master’s student, Maggie Harings. I assisted with eDNA filter collection and learned how to use a Citizen Science Sampler and the importance of recording legible observations. Our research team volunteered at the Arctic Research Open House and UA’s Museum of the North’s Family Day Water Event to provide a child-friendly hands-on activity on eDNA. We were able to demonstrate to children and adults how to retrieve water samples by guiding them on how to use the Citizen Science Sampler. With this valuable experience, I transferred to UAF to obtain my B.S. in Biological Sciences. With the samples taken from the Chena River sample sites, the focus of my research project is correlating the Arctic grayling patterns with the salmon abundance through DNA extractions. Conducting undergraduate research has played a significant role in continuing my education and learning laboratory techniques that could be an integral part in future research. With the support and encouragement of Dr. López and Maggie Harings, I have been presented with opportunities and research that I would not have pursued otherwise, and have valuable experience that will be universally applicable in my future career. We acknowledge the Troth Yeddha’ Dena people of the Lower Tanana River on whose traditional lands we live and conduct research. We have deep gratitude for their past and present stewardship of the local resources from which we benefit and learn.
Meet Your WDAFS Officers

President: Laurie Earley  
Hometown: Colchester, VT  
Education: B.S., University of Rhode Island; M.S., Auburn University  
Employer: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Essex Junction, VT  
Interests: Outdoor recreation of all kinds, traveling, gardening, cooking, reading, and exploring our surroundings with our 1 year old daughter.

Vice President: Julie Carter  
Hometown: Phoenix, AZ  
Education: B.S. Biology Northern Arizona University; M.S. University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Employer: Arizona Game and Fish Department  
Interests: I love to fish for trout and I’m currently working to complete the Arizona Trout Challenge and the Western Native Trout Challenge. Spending time hiking in the mountains, trips to the beach, and seeing live music with my family are my happy places.

Secretary-Treasurer: Laura Burckhardt  
Hometown: Casper, WY  
Education: M.S., University of Arizona  
Employer: Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Cody Wyoming  
Interests: I enjoy exploring nature. Including hiking, kayaking, rafting, paddleboarding, backpacking, camping, skiing, fishing, hunting, harvesting and preserving my own food. I also enjoy helping kids learn to love and take care of our natural resources.

President-Elect: Eric Fetherman  
Hometown: Lakewood, CO  
Education: B.S., Colorado State University; M.S., Colorado State University; Ph.D., Colorado State University  
Employer: Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Fort Collins, CO  
Interests: I enjoy hiking and backpacking with my wife, especially in Rocky Mountain National Park on any free weekend we can find, as well as hunting, fishing, birdwatching, and photography.

Past-President: Dan Brauch  
Hometown: Meeker, CO  
Education: B.S., Colorado State University  
Employer: Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Gunnison, CO  
Interests: Looking forward to travelling more and hopeful that Covid related travel concerns are soon part of our past! I enjoy hiking, hunting, fishing, and seeing the awesome scenery throughout much of the West with my family.

Student Representative: Jack McLaren  
Hometown: Denver, CO  
Education: B.S. University of Notre Dame. M.S. Indiana University.  
Employer: PhD. Candidate, Utah State University  
Interests: I love to float, fly-fish, camp, and hunt with my friends, family, and corgi. I also serve the community through the Utah State University Catholic Newman Center.