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Business Meeting Minutes

Southeastern Fishes Council

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Business Meeting Minutes

Business Meeting 34th Annual Meeting (2008) Southeastern Fishes Council Chattanooga Marriott and Convention Center Chattanooga, Tennessee

The 2008 business meeting of the Southeastern Fishes Council was called to order by Chair Bernie Kuhajda at 4:10 p.m. This was the second stand-alone meeting of the Southeastern Fishes Council. Sixty-six people attended the business meeting.

Secretary's Report

Rebecca Blanton announced that the minutes from the 2007 business meeting were approved unanimously. Thirty-two members voted by email. The approved 2007 minutes are posted on the Southeastern Fishes Council website.

Treasurer's Report

Anna George summarized the society's financial standings, noting an increase in membership and a healthy bank account with over \$11,000 carried over from 2007, and \$35,000 in the society's account prior to payment of the various meeting costs. After the meeting, Treasurer George provided a detailed report of the society's financial standing, including deductions associated with the 2008 meetings to the Executive Committee.

Treasurer George thanked the World Wildlife Fund for their continued support of SFC. She also proposed a raise in membership dues for 2009 to cover the cost of maintaining a Paypal account for the society and general inflation. The proposed changes were as follows: (1) student membership would be raised from \$10 to \$15; (2) Regular membership would be raised from \$20 to \$30; and a new family membership option, which would include only one copy of the Proceedings per household, would be added at a cost of \$40. Lifetime membership cost would stay at \$400. Gerry Dinkins moved that the proposed changes be accepted; his motion was seconded by Hank Bart. The motion was opened for discussion by Chair Kuhajda.

David Etnier proposed keeping student membership at the current cost and raising regular membership by an additional \$5. Chair Kuhajda noted that even with the proposed increase for students, membership was still very affordable and well below most society costs. Treasurer George called for a vote for the original proposed changes. The motion was passed unanimously. Treasurer George informed the membership that registration rates for the 2009 Annual Meeting to be held at Guntersville State Park in Alabama would be approximately the same as the 2008 meeting rates.

Committee Reports

Nominating Committee – Gerry Dinkins

Chair of the Nominating Committee, Gerry Dinkins, asked if there were a required number of people for this committee. Chair Kuhajda reported that the SFC Constitution stated two additional people should assist the Chair of each committee. Gerry agreed to find two additional members to serve on the nominating committee.

Bernie Kuhajda suggested adding a list of past chairs to the SFC website and asked about nominating a Council Historian to put together and maintain a list of past Chairs. Gerry Dinkins suggested adding a list of all current and past SFC officers. Bruce Bauer and Hank Bart pointed out that older lists do exist including one in the Proceedings, but that the list needed to be updated.

Program Committee – Jim Williams, Chair and Anna George

Jim Williams announced that in an effort to keep SFC meetings as centrally located and accessible for the membership as possible, the plan for future meeting locations was to have the meeting held in Chattanooga, TN every third year, and at different locations in the southeast for other years. He also announced that the 2009 SFC meeting would be held at Guntersville State Park in northern Alabama on the 12th and 13th of November, 2009. He described the park's features noting that the park has recently renovated facilities, several accommodation choices ranging in cost from \$10/night for camping to \$125/night for chalets, meals provided at an on-site dining hall and several nearby dining options in Guntersville, free internet, and conference rooms that can accommodate 200 people. All information on the meeting site and upcoming meeting rates will be posted on the SFC website.

Jim Williams opened the floor for discussion. Brett Albanese asked if the meeting would be two entire days. Jim responded yes. Pat Rakes suggested that the symposium theme for the 2009 meeting continue along past meeting lines. He proposed the theme be the 'Not-so-desperate Dozen' to include talks highlighting successful recovery stories of southeastern fish species. A habitat recovery theme was also suggested. Jim agreed to consider these suggestions and asked that others submit ideas to him via email for the 2009 meeting symposium.

Jim asked for volunteers for local hosts for the 2009 meeting in Alabama and asked for members to consider taking on the role of Program Committee Chair, noting that his last year as Chair will be 2009.

Constitution Committee – nothing to report

Resolution Committee – nothing to report

Proceedings Committee – Editor, Marty O'Connell; Associate Editor, Chris Skelton

Editor O'Connell announced that the 50th issue of the Proceedings had been sent out to the membership. He also announced that the current regional editors want to be replaced and called for volunteers to serve as regional editors for the Proceedings and asked that anyone interested contact him via email. He also pointed out that his term as Editor expires in 2009 and asked for volunteers to take on this position at the end of his term. He also encouraged the membership to submit manuscripts for review and publication in the Proceedings.

Discussion: Jim Williams proposed replacing regional reports with state reports to more clearly define a reporter's region of coverage. Chair Kuhajda supported this proposal, noting the increase in state agency participation in the society that could thus result in improved reports if conducted at the state level rather than region level. Peggy Shute added that state reports were a good idea given the state Fish and Wildlife's potential role. Pat Rakes added to this idea that state reports could be submitted to state agencies for use on their websites. Jim Williams noted that this could also lead to funding opportunities for the society.

David Etnier suggested having multiple reporters for each state. Chair Kuhajda agreed that in some cases having multiple reporters could be beneficial.

Chris Skelton, Bruce Bauer, and Chair Kuhajda discussed the goals of regional/state reports. They noted that these reports provided an outlet to share ongoing research activities of the membership and to raise awareness and promote actions regarding fish conservation issues.

Gerry Dinkins asked if this change would require a change to the Constitution. Bernie Kuhajda stated that yes this would require a change to the constitution, and that such changes required a quorum of the membership to vote. Anna George noted that there was not a quorum at the business meeting, but that a vote could be held electronically. Chair Kuhajda and Jim Williams volunteered to write up the proposed Constitutional change from regional reports to state reports and present to the membership for vote via email.

Brett Albanese asked if the regional reports would continue to be published as part of the Proceedings or alternatively posted on the website. Chair Kuhajda and Jim Williams noted that publishing the reports online only would save money.

Chris Skelton said he was investigating having the Proceedings picked up by BioOne, which is free for nonprofit organizations. He also pointed out that all back issues of the Proceedings are available on the SFC website to current SFC members.

Awards Committee – Noel Burkhead

Noel Burkhead announced the winners of the 2007 student paper and poster competitions and noted that the winners, their presentation titles, and awards received were posted on the SFC website. He also announced winners of the 2008 Special Awards including the Most Fecund Lab Award which went to the Department of Fisheries at Auburn University for having the most student presentations from a single institution, and a special award to Anna George and Jim Williams to acknowledge their services and hard work to make the SFC stand-alone meetings such a huge success. Gratitude for their service was further emphasized by Chair Kuhajda and applause from the membership. Noel also announced that the winner of the Most Vagile Student Award had cancelled just before the meeting and the winner of that award would be reassigned at a later date.

Treasurer George encouraged student participation in the competitions noting the monetary award for the winners and that there were only nine competitors for the presentation award and only five for the poster award at the 2008 meeting.

Membership Committee – Hank Bart, Chair, and Rebecca Blanton

Rebecca Blanton provided a summary of the overall membership for the society for 2007 and 2008 and presented the following to those attending the business meeting:

2008: 192 total members (institutional and individual) including:

- 4 life members (2% of membership)
- 129 regular members (67%)
- 59 student members (31%)

Note: Overall membership has more than doubled since 2007; Student membership increased by more than 5 times that of 2007.

2007: Total of 79 members (institutional and individual) including:

- 4 life members (5% of membership)
- 64 regular members (81%)
- 11 student members (14%)

She also pointed out that membership renewal was now available online through the SFC website.

Tech Advisory Committee –

Chair Kuhajda and Jake Schaefer discussed the proposal to move the SFC website from the Florida Museum of Natural History to another hosting institution due to the growing needs of the society to have more direct access to the website, the need for a hosting institution that can support a Paypal account, and one that provides greater server space for adding high resolution images. Noel Burkhead and Chair Kuhajda acknowledged the generosity of the Florida Museum staff and suggested that the Society draft a letter to FLMNH personnel expressing the society's gratitude for their services.

Jake Schaefer announced that he had secured a domain name – sefishescouncil.org – for the website in the event the site was moved from the current hosting institution. He also presented two possible alternative options for moving the website: (1) using the server at University of Southern Mississippi or (2) using a hosting service.

Brett asked what advantages a hosting service would offer. Jake responded that they guarantee that the website is always up, but that they are expensive, whereas, USM is offering free non-restricted server space and to support our Paypal services. Jim Williams asked if the USM server was regularly backed-up. Jake responded that yes there was a backup server to guarantee no data loss, but that the website could be down in the event of power outages. Gerry Dinkins asked what other societies use (hosting site or institution servers). Hank Bart responded that the American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists use the Tulane University Museum of Natural History Server and Jake Schaefer pointed out that the Desert Fishes Council use a server at the University of Texas, which can support credit card payments to DFC.

Treasurer George stated that the previous problems with using Paypal on the FLMNH site had been resolved, but that a link to an offsite location was required. She also added that a hard drive could be purchased to backup the SFC website materials if needed. Brett Albanese asked if during the period of transition from current host to new host, if the website would be unavailable. Jake Schaefer indicated that there should be no downtime and that we should be able to establish a mirror page and a redirect page from the FLMNH site.

Chair Kuhajda recommended further consideration of options for establishing a new hosting site with continued discussion between Jake Schaefer, the Tech Advisory Committee, and the Executive Committee to reach a conclusion on what would best meet the needs of the society.

Old Business

- 1. Electronic Only Proceedings** – Mel Warren asked if a decision had been made regarding a former proposal to have the Proceedings published electronically and eliminate paper copies. He argued for this change, noting that SFC was conservation oriented and eliminating paper copies would promote this agenda.

Discussion: Jim Williams asked how much the society would save by eliminating paper copies. Treasurer George responded that it cost \$2,000 for layout and printing costs and that electronic only would save \$1250. She suggested providing members with the option to choose electronic or paper versions of the Proceedings. Chair-elect Gerry Dinkins pointed out that adding the state (regional) reports would increase the size and thus cost of publishing the Proceedings. As a solution, he suggested publishing state reports online only. Brook Fluker noted that if this was done, the information in the reports could not be cited. Chair Kuhajda argued that the website could be cited instead. Treasurer George agreed to add an option on membership renewal forms to choose either a paper or electronic version of the Proceedings. Brett Albanese moved that society go to an electronic only format for publishing the Proceedings. Noel Burkhead seconded the motion. David Etnier pointed out that hard copies would still be needed for libraries. Chair Kuhajda recommended shelving the motion with further consideration and also to allow Chris Skelton time to further investigate our options through BioOne. Brett agreed to shelve the motion.

- 2. Formal Partnership with SARP (requested in 2007)** – Chair Kuhajda reminded the membership that in 2007 SARP had requested a formal partnership with SFC, but there was much dissent from the membership. He asked that we return to their proposal for reconsideration. He noted that SARP has imperiled aquatic species workgroups and they would like to have SFC members as part of these groups.

Discussion: Noel Burkhead pointed out that SARP is focused on applied restoration and not research oriented. Participation of SFC members could offer a research based contingent to help improve their restoration efforts. Chair Kuhajda agreed that having an SFC member(s) serve on these committees would be a plus. He also clarified that SFC would not become an official affiliate of SARP, but would participate in workgroups and restoration committees. Steve Rider noted that SARP is an organization that is trying to find its way at the moment and is in need of funding for restoration projects. He agreed that having an SFC member working with SARP would help guide their efforts in a positive way. Chair Kuhajda reiterated that SARP wants our input and involvement and that it would be stupid to not offer a research based voice in their applied recovery efforts, not to mention that having an SFC representative on their committees would help promote the goals of SFC.

Chair Kuhajda requested a motion to have a member be the official SFC representative of SARP. Noel Burkhead moved; Jim Williams seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

- 3. White Paper or Resolution to Guide Water Supply Development During Droughts** – Chair Kuhajda noted previous discussion to have SFC draft a white paper or resolution regarding water supply development during drought conditions and noted that this effort never got off the ground.

Discussion: Mary Freeman said that the water problem was not going away and that this is still a major problem in Georgia. She emphasized the need for scientific input in guiding water usage and storage solution in the states suffering from drought conditions, noting that major water usage plans are being made with little input from fish researchers. Given the severity of the problem Mary further argued that a Resolution only would fall short and not be a sufficient course of action.

Chair Kuhajda noted that a White Paper is a large, difficult job. Jim Williams suggested selecting a chair and committee to put together a White Paper draft. Mary Freeman suggested a national publication in Fisheries instead of a White Paper. Gerry Dinkins noted that the Duck River Association was trying to develop ways to meet water needs in upcoming years and that they are considering reservoir construction and other disturbing ideas to deal with drought and water shortage issues. Jim Williams suggested a Chair be nominated to lead and form a committee to put together a publication or white paper to draw attention to these issues. Brett Albanese noted that we should consider our audience in deciding which route to take.

Chair Kuhajda called for volunteers to serve as Chair of a White Paper/publication committee. Mary Freeman volunteered to head the committee and start emails to form a committee and determine the best route for addressing the water usage issues discussed.

- 4. Surface Mining Resolution** – Chair Kuhajda noted that the comments and resolution opposing the reduction of buffer zones around streams for surface mining were unsuccessful.
- 5. Opposition to federal agency self-regulation regarding T&E species** – Jim Williams discussed the opposition to the proposal to allow federal agencies to monitor themselves with regards to protecting threatened and endangered species rather than having to go through the Fish and Wildlife Service. Jim noted that 300,000 letters discussing proposed changes to the ESA were received by the USFWS, but the current Administration was attempting to push changes through quickly, without full consideration of written and voiced opposition. However, the new administration, under President Obama would have the opportunity to review the letters and proposed changes to the ESA.

New Business

Chair Kuhajda suggested taking the Desperate Dozen concept of the 2008 meeting to the state and regional levels in an official capacity. Mel Warren suggested going to states for funding. Chair Kuhajda noted that the Desperate Dozen accounts would be published in the SFC Proceedings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Secretary Rebecca Blanton Johansen