

January 28th, 2020

Dear AFS-FHS Members,

Happy New Year! I hope that everyone is getting a strong start to the new year and wish you the best as we begin this new decade.

First, I'd like to start by addressing the state of the FHS. As of the beginning of this year, we have 191 paid members, which is down from 316 in December. This is likely a result of the renewal process, which is in December. I encourage each of you to check your membership status and if you have not renewed, please remember to do so. Your continued support is what makes the AFS and the FHS strong. Renewing is easy and can be done [online](#). For those of you who are not members, I strongly encourage you to [join](#), become active members, and enjoy the benefits of membership. The Recruitment and Student Involvement Committee is planning for a membership drive later this year, so stay tuned for this!

Next, I'd like to provide an update on movement within the section concerning the Blue Book. At the 2018 FHS Annual meeting, a proposal was brought to EXCOM to evaluate the inspection manual of the Blue Book, with the following concerns:

- Limited involvement of private stakeholder groups (i.e., aquaculture industry) on the Handbook Revision & Oversight Committee (HROC),
- Unbalanced representation on HROC with respect to regulatory authorities,
- Primary focus on salmonids,
- Lack of mollusk and crustacean pathogens,
- Does not address transboundary pathogens that pose a risk to N. America,
- Possible liability risk to FHS since the Blue Book is referenced in state law.

To respond to this proposal, a 10-person ad-hoc committee was formed, through the Policy/Position Development Committee (PPDC), to evaluate the Blue Book, with representation from states, NOAA, APHIS, FWS, FHS technical standards committee, National Aquaculture Association, Tribes, and diagnostic labs. The three goals of the committee were to:

1. Evaluate the structure and function of HROC
2. Evaluate and determine if and in what manner the Inspection Manual needs to be updated
3. Evaluate the Inspection Manual revision process (does it work; should the process be revised)

The Ad-hoc committee completed discussion of all three goals and prepared a final report. Since the ad-hoc committee was formed through the PPDC, the report is currently being handled through the [procedures](#) of the PPDC committee. Once this process has been completed, the recommendations will be brought forth to the EXCOM and these will be integral to updating the Blue Book.

With assistance from the FHS, the parent society submitted a grant through the Multistate Conservation Grant program, to seek funds to make necessary updates to the BB. I'm excited to inform you that the grant was recommended for funding! To accomplish this, a steering committee representing state, federal, tribal, and private stakeholders will be appointed to work with a project manager (to be hired with funds) to oversee the revision process using recommendations of the ad-hoc committee. Subject

matter experts will be appointed to working groups to address the revision needs. Working groups will address their charges primarily through conference calls/webinars but will be brought together for at least one in-person meeting during the project period to ensure efficient completion of assigned tasks. The steering committee will also operate remotely but will meet twice with representatives of the working groups to establish charges/assign tasks and finalize the revised Blue Book. The project manager will be responsible for coordinating the aforementioned meetings, ensuring progress related to action items and timelines, and generally facilitating the work of the steering committee and working groups. AFS staff will provide administrative support, ensure completion of reporting requirements, and assistance with telecommunications and related support services.

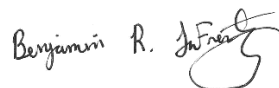
There will be many moving parts to this process, and I am currently planning a meeting with FHS and AFS leadership to begin discussions on how this will be accomplished. As more information becomes available, I'll relay with information to you.

Thirdly, one goal during my Presidency is to ensure there is good communication between EXCOM/FHS Committees and the FHS membership. As many of you know, behind the scenes, members of our FHS committees and EXCOM devote hours of volunteer time to many different initiatives and activities which may go unnoticed by the FHS membership. To improve this communication, I have asked each committee chair to provide a mid-year synopsis of committee activities. At the end of this letter, you will find these committee reports, and I hope that you take the time to read them and see all the great work that is currently going on. I'd like to thank the committee chairs and members for assisting in this process. As I have previously said, it is my opinion that an engaged and informed membership will make our section even stronger, spark member interest in contributing to the section, and lead to a greater ability to accomplish the objectives of the FHS.

Finally, I'd like to remind you of the 2020 [Joint Meeting of the Northeast Fish Health Committee and the Fish Health Section Annual Meeting](#) to be held in Burlington, VT on June 22-26th and the [61st Western Disease Fish Workshop](#) to be held June 15-18th in Hood River, OR. Planning and organizing efforts are currently underway for both meetings and more details concerning registration, etc. will be forthcoming.

Thank you again for allowing me to serve as President of the FHS. If you have any questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Take care-



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Mid-Year FHS Committee Updates

Technical Standards Committee (Chair: Mohamed Faisal)

The TSC have been working towards completion of what was initiated under Dr. Cova Arias' leadership: Dr. Arias was handling two BB chapter updates: Streptococcosis and Microsporidiosis. We, Dr. Amy Long, Dr. Sacha Hallett, and I, were able to regroup and organized all correspondences and now finishing the peer reviews and chapters are being send back to authors. We hope to receive the amended manuscripts by the end of the year. The Streptococcosis chapter is being handled by Dr. Long and the Microsporidiosis chapter is being handled by Dr. Hallett.

Dr. Sascha Hallett initiated a template to be used in all updated chapters in order to achieve a consistency in format for all chapters, currently they are heterogenous. This template was reviewed by the Committee and is being sent to authors along with their reviewed chapters.

We received an update of the chapter on Perkinsiosis. This chapter has been sent for peer review and we are hoping that this process will be completed by the end of 2019 as well.

Dr. Hallett has been instrumental in connecting the past to the present and helping in filling gap of information that happened due to Cova's tragic absence. She, thankfully, volunteered to continue to serve on this committee for the remainder of the year.

Dr. Kathleen Hartman joined the Committee and an invitation for our first meeting will go out at the first week of 2020 to discuss the new activities. There is a number of chapter updates in pipes like: EEDV, LMBV, and Flavobacteriosis. If all goes as planned, this year will be a productive year for the Technical Standard Committee.

Professional Standards Committee (Chair: Mark Lawrence)

A. Progress toward goals

The AFS-FHS Professional Standards Committee has four major goals in 2019-2020:

- 1. Turnaround time for applicants. One month from date application is received to when applicant is notified.** With the modified application processing procedure from last year, turnaround time is meeting our goal, and we will continue to maintain this goal. In January 2020, we implemented a new procedure to expedite the process further. The PSC Executive Secretary has established a shared Google Docs folder for the FHS PSC. When all the required application materials for an applicant is received, the Executive Secretary loads them into a labeled folder in Google Docs. The PSC Chair notifies committee members that a new application is ready for review and assigns reviewers. As reviews are completed, committee members upload review forms directly into the Google Docs folder for the applicant. We are currently in our first set of applications being processed this way.

2. **Review and update AAHI and Certified Fish Pathologist review forms.** The forms were reviewed and updated in July 2018. The committee has set up a shared Google Docs folder so the members can review them and make any suggested modifications.
3. **Review and update examinations.** The PSC Executive Secretary has loaded the current exams into the shared PSC Google Docs folder for the committee members to review the questions. He has also loaded suggested questions that have been submitted by candidates taking the exams in recent years. The last time exams were updated was 2008.
4. **With the FHS Executive Committee, establish long-term vision and goals for CFP program.** The PSC sent an email to the President of the FHS on September 30, 2019 expressing the PSC's concern that the number of CFP is slowly declining without new applicants being added. The committee will wait on a decision from the FHS Executive Committee on whether this trend should be discussed.

In summary, progress is being made toward all four goals for 2019-2020, with important work remaining to complete review and updates of review forms and exams.

B. Conducting regular PSC business

1. **Reviewing applications for certification or recertification as Aquatic Animal Health Inspectors or Fish Pathologists.** The PSC reviewed the following applications:

CFP applicants, 3 reviewed (all recertifications, all renewed)

AAHI applicants, 13 reviewed

9 recertifications (all renewed)

4 new applications (3 passed and waiting on exams, 1 denied)

Nominating and Balloting Committee (Chair: Derek Gibbs)

The committee will be preparing for the 2020 elections and will strive to have at least two qualified candidates nominated for each position to be filled.

Policy/Position Development Committee (Chair: Tom Loch)

Thus far, the PPDC has had several email exchanges towards the development of goals to accomplish this year as listed below. The PPDC will be having a conference call in Mid-December to discuss these items/develop a road map for their completion, but also to discuss important aquatic animal related issues with the hope of identifying an issue that will begin to be worked on (to date, potential "policy worthy" issues that have been raised include fish welfare, global climate change, utilization of standardized and validated diagnostic assays, and evidence-based decision making). This committee is showing lots of energy and members are optimistic that positive progress as it relates to PPDC duties will be made over the course of this year.

Archives Committee (Co-Chairs: Diane Elliott and Barb Johnston)

Two new members joined the committee, Barb Johnston and Matt Stinson. The committee will be hosting a conference call to discuss initiatives for the year.

Awards Committee (Chair: Luke Iwanowicz)

During the current cycle Nicole Nietisbach was recently appointed to the committee and Luke Iwanowicz was appointed chair.

During November the committee circulated a solicitation for the SDSA Award. Nominations are due before February 1, 2020.

During February the committee will circulate an announcement in the Fish Health Newsletter regarding Student Travel Awards for the upcoming annual meeting in Vermont. We are in the process of determining available funds for this year for student support. We plan to request \$5000 to support travel.

The Committee continually attempts to maintain an up-to-date list of previous SDSA contact information.

We plan to reach out to members to identify previous awardees of the Special Achievement/ Distinguished Service Award as there appears to be a gap in reporting between 2006 and 2010 and 2011 through present. This will also include reading through archived Newsletter and listserv documents. While it is possible this award was not given during many of these years, our records document that need to be in order.

Once the announcement is made for the student travel awards, we plan to provide guidance that will be circulated in the Newsletter regarding judging criteria to help students when they are preparing their presentations and posters for the Annual Meeting.

The committee seeks to identify student judges well in advance to the annual meeting this year and digitize the final scoring documents for archival purposes and to simplify the scoring process for the judges.

Continuing Education Committee (Chair: George Sanders)

Details of 2019 CE offerings were forwarded to be added to the list of previous AFS-FHS continuing education classes (from 1994) available on the AFS-FHS website.

Our RACE Provider status (valid for two years) was successfully renewed January 16, 2019 and is good until January 16, 2021. Renewal is online and payment must occur concurrently by credit/debit card. Status can be renewed any time prior to expiration but the processing date automatically becomes the new expiration/renewal date.

On April 5, 2019 in conjunction with the Eastern Fish Health Workshop in Lake Placid, New York, USA; the CE session entitled "Aquatic Parasitology" was held at a cost of \$90 USD per attendee. The goals for

this continuing education workshop will be to provide veterinarians, veterinarian technicians and fish health professionals a good basic understanding of some the parasitic groups, those that span wild, cultured, and aquarium host populations, and sessions will also stress innovation and new technological approaches to control and identification. The speakers/instructors were Roy Yanong, Sascha Hallett, Jan Lovi, Mark Fast, and Shane Boylan. This CE session was RACE approved (546-36040) for 5.0 hours of Veterinarian and Veterinary Technician CE credits at a cost of \$225.00. Fifty one individuals attended this event at \$90 per attendee.

On June 20, 2019 in conjunction with the combined AFS Fish Health Section & 60th Western Fish Disease Workshop in Ogden, Utah, USA; the CE session entitled "*Flavobacteria and Integrated Fish Health Management*" will held at a cost of \$70 USD per attendee. The goals of this continuing education workshop is to provide veterinarians, veterinarian technicians and fish health professionals with a broad overview of Flavobacterium and the overall benefits to implementing an integrated fish health management program for many fish pathogens. The program will begin with a summary of the genus Flavobacterium and will narrow its focus to cold water (*Flavobacterium psychrophilum*) and cool/warm water (*Flavobacterium columnare*) fish pathogens. The speakers/instructors will be Thomas Loch, Ken Cain, Benjamin LaFrentz, Gregory Wiens, Wade Cavender, Doug Munson, David Burbank, Anita Kelly, and William Hemstreet. This CE Session was RACE approved (546-37033) for 6.5 hours of Veterinarian and Veterinary Technician CE credits at a cost of \$255.00. 80 individuals attended this program at \$70 per attendee.

For the WFDW CE session the CEC in conjunction with the local CE committee successfully stream-line the process of general conference evaluation, RACE required CE session evaluation, and distribution of CE certificates. We utilized the FHS Survey Monkey account that was established previously. We set up a general conference evaluation form for the combined AFS-FHS & WFDW meeting. We establish the RACE required CE session evaluation form so that this information can be collected and documented electronically rather than by hand. This information and summary reports of who physically attended and their contact information were used to create a faster turn-around time for the provision of CE certificate to attendees after the session. The CEC will be using this Survey Monkey process and set-up in the year 2020 for use by the EFHW, the WFDW, and the FHS Meeting.

Handbook Revision & Oversight Committee (Co-Chairs: Gavin Glenney and Mohamed Faisal)

We will be calling for the committee to meet in January, to discuss past agendas and future goals.

At the January meeting we will be discussing moving forward in adopting two real-time PCR assays (Viral hemorrhagic septicemia virus and Renibacterium salmoninarum) into the Blue Book with the help of sub-committees and expert individuals. Completed ring tests exist for both these assays. Appendix A3.4- H.2013-2014 Position Statement #2 talks about updating VHSV rev.trans. real-time PCR tests for the confirmatory detection of VHSV.

At the January meeting we will also be working on the status of molecular methods for detecting Myxobolus cerebralis, and the potential for adopting a real-time PCR assay into the Blue Book. This will involve determining the suitability of two real-time PCR assays (HSP 70 and 18S rDNA) put forth by

Cavendar et al. 2004. To our knowledge, no formal ring testing has been conducted on either of these assays. We will contact Wade Cavendar for confirmation.

International Meeting Oversight Committee (Chair: Dave Groman)

The committee is preparing a Call for Proposal to Host the 9th International Symposium on Aquatic Animal Health in 2022. Once finalized, the document will be sent out through the listserv update.

Section Communication Committee (Chair: Stacy Strickland)

The Section Communications Committee consists of two members in-charge of FHS communications with section members and non-member fish health professionals. Current forms of communication include the website and listserv. Stacy Strickland is listserv editor (since 2019) and committee chair, Charlie Giesecker has converted to an advisory committee member, and the website administrator/webmaster position has recently been filled by Benjamin Americus.

Highlights:

1. Through the newsletter and occasional email announcements, the listserv continues to inform members of FHS news, student opportunities, fish health related meetings/workshops/courses, job/assistantship announcements, resources and fish health in the news. Stacy focused mostly on sending out a monthly newsletter. Most of the information has been supplied by members and others in the field. Stacy also contacts committee chairs to request information.
2. Ben LaFrentz has stepped in as the temporary website editor to work with various committees and members to ensure website information is updated and easily accessible. The website is also used for displaying information about upcoming meetings and workshops, including continuing education opportunities. Applications and information for the QA/QC certification are now available on the website.
3. The 2018 ISAAH website has been transferred to the FHS's website and the backbone can be used for future ISAAH meetings.
4. We currently have 475 FHS members and colleagues receiving the FHS update through the listserv.

Recruitment and Student Involvement Committee (Chair: Amy Long)

1. Member profiles have been updated on the AFS-FHS Students & Early Career Members blog, <https://afs-fhs-students.blogspot.com/>
2. Two new members have joined the committee, Mary Belle Offutt and Katharine Onofryton.

Fish Health Laboratory QA/QC Committee (Chair: Chris Wilson)

In the last quarter of 2019, our committee reviewed and approved the Tier 1 applications for both the Warm Springs and LaCrosse USFWS Fish Health Centers. We have received the first Tier 2 application and will be hosting the coached internal audit under the supervision of USDA/NAHLN personnel and

committee members this month, followed by a teleconference meeting the following day. We are sad to lose two of our founding members of the committee, Vicki Milano and Doug Munson, who are retiring this year.