



Fish Health Section - American Fisheries Society

Dear Fellow AFS-FHS Members,

Please allow me to extend my best wishes to you and your families during this holiday season, especially as we all continue to face the numerous challenges of 2020. A top holiday wish of mine this year is that each of you is able to take some time to safely celebrate with your family, relax, and recharge for the brighter days I see rapidly approaching in 2021.

I also wanted to take this opportunity to provide a few brief updates on various ongoing efforts being taken by your fellow AFS-FHS members. As you are aware, the AFS, in collaboration with the FHS, received a grant from the Multistate Conservation Grant program to support revising and updating the Blue Book. Although COVID-19 delayed these efforts, we are now in the final stages of selecting and hiring the Project Manager that will lead the Blue Book revision process in concert with a steering committee that will be composed of state, federal, tribal, and private stakeholders. I anticipate these efforts will begin in earnest in early 2021.

In the meantime, several important updates and revisions to the AFS-FHS Blue Book occurred through the “typical” process (i.e., via AFS-FHS Technical Standards Committee and/or via Handbook Revision and Oversight Committee efforts) in 2020. For example, the new 2020 edition of the AFS-FHS Blue Book contains: updated Section 1 chapters for Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS), Bacterial Kidney Disease (BKD), Streptococcosis, and *Perkinsus* spp. infections of Marine Mollusks; updates in Section 2 that, for the first time, now include real-time PCR assays for the detection of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia Virus (Jonstrup et al. 2013) and *Renibacterium salmoninarum* (Chase et al. 2006); and the Appendix position statements supporting these updates, all of which can be seen at <https://units.fisheries.org/fhs/fish-health-section-blue-book-2020/>.

Next, a quick update that the various AFS-FHS committees are hard at work on the goals they provided for the current term. Relatedly, the AFS-FHS Policy/Position Development Committee (PPDC) has been reviewing the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM) draft Guidance For Industry (GFI) #61 document (can be accessed at the following link; <https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/cvm-gfi-61-special-considerations-incentives-and-programs-support-approval-new-animal-drugs-minor>), **which provides guidance intended to assist those interested in pursuing FDA approval of new animal drugs, including those for use in aquatic animals.** Although any individual may provide comment (also at link above) on this document until Jan. 11, 2021, the PPDC is aiming to provide some pertinent information to help inform AFS-FHS members should they wish to provide any comments on this document that has important implications for aquatic animal health in the USA. Please keep your eye out for that information.

I also wanted to relay that as of now, the 2021 Annual Meeting of the AFS-FHS is still scheduled to be held jointly with the Northeast Fish Health Committee (NEFHC) on July 12-15, 2021 in Burlington, VT (more information at the following link; [2021 Joint Meeting of the Northeast Fish Health Committee and AFS Fish Health Section](#)). That said and given the uncertainty posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, discussions are ongoing and we are striving to provide a final decision as soon as we are able.

As 2021 begins, I will be striving to form an ad hoc AFS-FHS Strategic Planning Committee with the aim of helping to solidify the contemporary short, medium, and longer-term visions of our section, and will continue

in dialogues towards forming a consortium with entities interested in sustaining efforts to keep the Blue Book in a contemporary state for years to come.

Until then, wishing you the safest and happiest of holidays and an amazing and prosperous beginning to 2021,



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