

# **Minutes of the 45th Annual Business Meeting of the Florida Chapter American Fisheries Society**

**May 14, 2025**

**Guy Harvey Resort, St. Augustine Beach, FL**

President Angela Collins called the meeting to order at 1630 hours and Secretary/Treasurer Sara Menendez established a quorum with approximately 90 Chapter members in attendance including current officers, past presidents, and committee chairs. Past officers were asked to stand to be recognized.

Angela asked for and received approval of the agenda and 2024 business meeting minutes.

*After numerous membership requests to shorten the typical business meeting, as a time saving measure, a Chapter Business Update document was distributed to Chapter membership before the business meeting. That document is included as an appendix to these minutes.*

Angela provided a background of the purpose of the business meeting.

## **AFS and Southern Division AFS Business:**

Miguel (Toño) Garcia-Bermudez (AFS President) sends his regrets. Angela provided updates for AFS National meeting (San Antonio, TX Aug 10 – 14 2025). Mentioned that there will be a Black Bass Symposium at the National Meeting that the Florida Chapter contributed to as a sponsor. She encouraged FLAFS members to participate at the broader national level (as members or more direct service – committee participation, etc.).

Angela provided Southern Division AFS updates. The FL Chapter supported the winner of the 2024 FL Chapter meeting's best student paper (Andy Distrubell) to attend the conference in Asheville, NC. The next SDAFS meeting will be in New Orleans in Spring 2026. Dates still TBD.

## **Old Chapter Business:**

The FL Chapter (Dan Nelson) has volunteered to host the SDAFS meeting in 2029. Dan Nelson is planning committee chair and those interested in assisting should contact Dan. Planning has started.

Sara Menendez provided updates on the Treasurer's Report and Rottman Memorial Fund. See appendix for more detailed information.

## **Committee Reports:**

Angela recognized committee members and briefly reviewed committee highlights (see Appendix for more detailed information on accomplishments of each committee). Recognize committee members and briefly reviewed committee highlights (included in the Appendix below).

## **Student Subunit:**

Student Subunit President: Cody Eggenberger to give update on student subunit activities, promoted their Reefs to Rivers blog and its success (158 posts, meaning that 158 students have been supported since it's inception!!), showed how their social media presence has increased in both viewership and location of viewers.

Cody then presented the newly elected subunit officers:

President: Angela Barreto (NSU)

Vice President: Miranda Brohman (NSU)

Secretary/Treasurer: Cameron Atkinson (FIU)

University Liaison: Tommy Domohowski (UF)

### **Awards:**

Dennis Punches Memorial Student Travel Awards: Angela reported that 19 students were supported this year, covering all meeting costs. The funds provided by the West Palm Beach Fishing Club on behalf of the Punches Family now account for over 50% of student travel funds, hence the award name change. The continued importance of the raffle for this as well.

Roger Rottmann Memorial Scholarship: Dan Nelson to present the 27<sup>th</sup> annual Rottmann Scholarships. Logan Masterson received the M.S. Rottman Scholarship and Jessica Keller received the Ph.D. Rottman Scholarship.

Florida Chapter Awards – Eric Nagid to present the Outstanding Achievement Award, which recognizes individuals for specific and distinct accomplishments and contributions to fisheries, aquatic sciences, and to the Florida Chapter. John Davis received the 2025 Outstanding Achievement Award.

Eric Nagid to present the Rich Cailteux Award, which is meant to recognize individuals for their career contributions to the fisheries profession and the Florida Chapter. Mike Allen was then named the 13<sup>th</sup> recipient of the Rich Cailteux Award for his longstanding contribution to fisheries research and management.

Further details on the accomplishments of Chapter Award recipients are found in the Meeting Minutes Appendix.

### **Installation of New Officers:**

Due to a single candidate each for the President-Elect, it was decided to hold a verbal vote instead of a paper ballot vote for simplicity. By a unanimous vote, Summer Lindelien was voted President-Elect. Bob Haegey, John Davis, and Sarah Torre also volunteered to become the next Raffle Committee Chairs as the previous chairs retired from their duties.

Angela presents plaques to Chelsey Crandall, Amanda Croteau and Geoff Smith for their years of service as raffle chairs, Cody Eggenberger for his year of service as Student Subunit President, Ed Camp for completing his three years of service as Chapter President.

New Executive Committee:

President: Steve Beck (FWC)

President-Elect: Summer Lindelien (FWC)

Past-President: Angela Collins (UF)

Secretary/Treasurer: Sara Menendez (FWC)

### **New Business:**

- 1) Due to excess funds, the Chapter continues to give back to the AFS community. The following donations were given in 2025: \$500 Student Subunit presidential travel stipend, \$1500 Steidinger Scholarship, \$1000 Black Bass Symposium/national AFS donation.
- 2) Proceeding with separating Sec/Treas positions over this next year. The chapter already voted to proceed with this during last year's meeting.

- 3) ExComm will be working during summer/fall 2025 to update the bylaws. At the 2024 meeting, chapter approved this motion, allowing ExComm to review and update the bylaws. Much as with item 2 above, the revised bylaws will require changes to the Chapter bylaws and procedures. The proposal for the Executive Committee to provide updated position descriptions and potential bylaw/procedure changes to the Chapter passed with unanimous consent.

Next year's meeting venue/date:

FL AFS Chapter next meeting will be at the Guy Harvey Resort St. Augustine Beach May 12-14, 2026

Steve Beck thanked membership and adjourned the business meeting at 1730 hours.

## APPENDIX:

### Business Meeting Update Document distributed to Chapter Membership May 13, 2025

## National and Southern Division AFS Updates

### Parent Society Updates

- 2025 National AFS Meeting will be in San Antonio, TX, August 10-14, 2025
- 2026 National Meeting will be in Columbus, Ohio

AFS – New Executive Director – Jeff Kopaska\_

### National AFS Governing Board:

- The governing board is the ultimate authority for the operation of the Society. More info at: <https://fisheries.org/about/governance/governing-board/>

### National Membership Committee:

- Membership in parent society continues to decline (8% decrease over the decade)
  - **Please renew your membership at the Society level!!** <https://fisheries.org/membership/types-of-membership/>  
Students (\$30), Early Career (\$55), Regular (\$115) + FL Chapter (\$10)
  - **Benefits:** subscription to monthly *Fisheries* magazine, complementary online access to AFS journals, discounts on books and Annual Meeting registration, access to Membership Directory, professional certification
  -

### From Southern Division President Jessican Baumann:

#### Election of new SDAFS officers

- President – Jessica Baumann – NC State University
- President-Elect – Dan Daugherty – Texas Parks and Wildlife
- Vice President – Kyle Hartman – West Virginia University
- Past President – Anthony Overton – Samford University
- S/T – Brandon Peoples – Clemson University

#### SDAFS Donations

- \$1,500 to MANNA to assist hurricane relief in Asheville, NC (host to our annual meeting).
  - Total for meeting fundraisers was \$3,000 from attendees, SDAFS, and NCAFS.
- Donations to support the annual parent society meeting and two hosted symposia
  - Crayfish and Black Bass
- Donation to support student activities at SEAFWA

#### SDAFS Awards - *Nominate your peers!*

- 2025 Outstanding Achievement Award to Kat Hoenke, Shawna Fix and Todd Ewing of the Southeast Aquatic Resource Partnership.
- Tom Kwak Distinguished Service Award – Tim Bonvecchio – GA
- Outstanding Small Chapter Award – GA
- Large Chapter – No applicants.

#### Goals as SDAFS President (from Jessica Baumann)

Work on highlighting the benefits of SDAFS and work on better communication and visibility of the division! Everyone has a lot on their plate, so how do we keep SDAFS relevant? Especially want to focus on our younger professionals...how do we keep them jazzed up about participating in SDAFS!!

- Better communication between SDAFS ExCom and State Chapters. A consistent theme is the confusion that occurs during the change of leadership roles and understanding how SDAFS and Chapters support

each other. *Therefore, I want to figure out a way to streamline all of this information, including a mid-year meeting with AFS Chapter presidents.*

- We have divisions awards each year that are receiving no applicants (including student monetary awards), so what platform do we need to use to highlight division awards....better website visibility... social media...messenger pigeon.....other??
- Being on ExCom while planning the 2025 SDAFS annual meeting highlighted the challenges that Chapters face while planning these large meetings and the need to reevaluate how SDAFS supports these efforts.

**Upcoming SDAFS Meetings:**

- 2026, New Orleans, Louisiana
- 2027, Alabama
- 2028, Mississippi
- 2029, Florida
- 2030, Puerto Rico

**FL Chapter Updates**

**Treasurers Report**

2024 Account Balances (Sara Menendez):

	<b>Cash</b> <b>(MS, WF, PP)</b>	<b>Mutual Fund</b> <b>(Morgan Stanley)</b>	<b>Total</b>
January 1, 2024	\$ 36,656.89	\$ 32,976.71	\$ 69,633.60
December 31, 2024	\$ 39,485.24	\$ 39,597.52	\$ 79,082.76
Difference:	\$ <b>2,828.35</b>	\$ <b>6,620.81</b>	\$ <b>9,449.16</b>

Rottman Memorial Scholarship Fund Report (Dan Nelson):

Net change in Cash Asset was \$1,351.16 even with the \$2,000 payment for the scholar winners last year, mainly from dividend payments from the mutual funds. Including all assets, the fund gained 3.75% in 2024 as total assets increased from \$49,720.04 to \$51,552.69.

**Roger Rottmann Memorial Scholarship Fund**  
Balance Sheet 31 December 2024  
Accrual Basis

Assets	
Franklin Income Fund A	\$32,771.35
Morgan Stanley Dividend Growth Fund B	\$15,119.28
Cash	\$3,662.06
Total Liabilities	\$0.00
Total Assets	\$51,552.69
Total Liabilities	\$0.00
Total Assets – Total Liabilities	\$51,552.69

Started year at \$49,720.04  
 Peaked November 30 at \$53,346.58  
 Previous year change is +3.75%  
 Estimated Annual Projected Income is \$2,106.50

**FLAFS Committee Updates**

Website: (<https://units.fisheries.org/fl/>)

Committee Chair: Jason O'Connor

Action Items Completed:

- Routine maintenance
- Refreshed formatting and reorganized Award pages
- Worked with Dan Nelson to convert paper-based Rottman application to a web form.
- Worked with AFS web developer to streamline management of officer contact info and dates/deadlines throughout the website.

Action Items in Progress/Pending:

Announcements:

- If any of the committees would find it valuable to have a dedicated page on the website to share information, let Jason know. (see Community Engagement example). We can also set up unlisted/password protected pages to facilitate storing and sharing files/documents among committee members.
- Seeking additional chapter member(s) to join and serve on the web development team. No prior web development experience necessary. If interested in serving on the website committee, contact Jason.

### Newsletter

Committee Chair: Bridgette Froeschke

Action Items Completed:

- Newsletters

Announcements:

- Thank you to the EXCOM, student subunit, and committees for submitting content to share with the chapter!

Questions or proposals for the Chapter:

- Need more content!

### Continuing Education

Committee Chair: Jason O'Connor

Committee Members: Allison Durland-Donahou, Nick Trippel, Carissa Gervasi, Kerry Flaherty-Walia, Dan Nelson, Michelle Shaffer, Brittany Hall-Scharf, Bridgette Froeschke, Rachel Liebman

Action Items Completed:

- Organized student-mentor lunch (22 pairs) and workshop (Net your next job! Resume Building and Job Preparation) for the 2025 FL Chapter Meeting

Announcements: We'd like to acknowledge the following outgoing committee members for their service to the Chapter over the last few years: Carissa Gervasi, Dan Nelson, Michelle Shaffer

- We are seeking new committee members to help develop and facilitate learning opportunities relevant to our chapter members. The committee generally meets virtually 3-4 times a year, and our goal is to organize a virtual workshop held during late summer/early fall and an in-person workshop held during the annual meeting. This committee is an excellent opportunity to get involved with the chapter. Students welcome!
- Reach out to Jason O'Connor or Allison Durland-Donahou for more information.
- Have a skill or information that other chapter members may benefit from? Please consider hosting a future workshop (either at the annual meeting or virtually)? Pitch your idea to the CE committee! We'll help make it happen.

### Community and Engagement

Action Items Completed:

- Change committee name per state compliance
- Created committee page on the Chapter website
- Shellcracker articles published
- Created anonymous question and idea suggestion link

Action Items in Progress/Pending:

- Initiating a "spotlight" series for the Shellcracker
- Drafting a Florida Chapter Dialogue Agreement

Announcements:

- Committee wants to remind members about the anonymous comment or suggestion form, available in the C&E section of our website (<https://units.fisheries.org/fl/about/cec/>)

## Membership

2024 Membership Report (Sara Menendez):

Membership Category	2022	2023	2024	Change	% Change
Total	168	253	265	+12	+4.7%
Student	48	71	70	-1	-1.4%
Society	133	126	105	-21	-16.7%

## Marketing and Membership Committee

Committee Chair: Open

Questions or proposals for the Chapter:

- Need for a new chair if committee is to continue
- Social media help needed? Chapter FB page (<https://www.facebook.com/FloridaAFS>; last updated May 2023) and Student Unit FB page (<https://www.facebook.com/AmericanFisheriesSocietyFIStudentChapter>; last updated April 2023)

## Policy Committee

Committee Chair: Edward Camp

Action Items Completed: None

Action Items in Progress/Pending: None

## Raffle Committee

Thank you to our past Committee Co-Chairs for their years of service, hard work and dedication: Amanda Croteau, Geoff Smith, and Chelsey Crandall!

**New Raffle Committee chairs are needed!**

Action Items Completed:

- Over \$9,730 of items from XX businesses and individuals were donated to this year's raffle and silent auction.
- The silent auction has a total estimated value >\$4,050
- The raffle has a total estimated value >\$5,680

Action Items in Progress/Pending:

- 100% of money raised by the raffle and silent auction, fund student travel awards so thank you for supporting our students!
- Buy raffle tickets!
- Remember the silent auction closes after the business meeting, so make sure to place your final bids!

Announcements:

- Buy raffle tickets!
- Bid on silent auction items!
- Last year's **2024 raffle raised \$4,281** – let's beat this record!

## Aquatic Cleanup:

Committee Chair: Nick Trippel

Action Items Completed:

- 2 cleanup events planned (one in Hernando cancelled due to weather, the other was at Harris Chain of Lakes)
  - Harris Chain of Lakes
  - 45 volunteers removed 1,360 lbs of trash this year
  - Total trash removed since 2019 start: 14,167 lbs

These cleanup events are something the chapter voted on and asked for, yet it is difficult to get much participation from chapter members. ANYONE can host a cleanup event and the chapter will reimburse them for up to \$250 for any supplies they need for their event such as trash bags, gloves, grabbers, water, etc. Events can be two people getting out to pick up trash or 200 people, it does not matter. Past events have coincided with International

Coastal Cleanup day, but they can be planned for any time of year. Questions, just reach out to Nick!  
[nicholas.trippel@myfwc.com](mailto:nicholas.trippel@myfwc.com)

Executive Committee

- Secured a continuing donation (Dennis Panches Travel Award through the West Palm Beach Fishing Club) of \$5000 per year to help cover student travel to AFS meetings.
- Created a new annual practice that dedicates \$500 to assist Student Sub-unit President to travel to national AFS and encourage student leadership in the Profession.
- Continued practice of covering expenses for the Best Student Presentation winner to attend the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society Annual meeting (2025 in Asheville, NC).
- Our 2024 meeting had a registration of 152 attendees (44 of which were students), and representation from 24 institutions. Twenty-two students were able to attend the 2024 Florida Chapter meeting with expenses fully covered. We hosted a student-mentor lunch during the annual meeting and had participation from 22 student-mentor pairs. During the 2024 annual meeting, a career panel was held by our continuing education committee. The event was attended by 40 people and provided chapter members with insights into academic and professional careers within fisheries.
- Supported local outreach events or other opportunities centered around conservation of fish and their habitat throughout the state:
  - \$200 towards a kids fishing derby targeting nonnative fish in Tampa Bay,
  - \$1,500 to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission’s Steidinger Internship Program to be used towards a fisheries summer internship,
  - Supported local aquatic trash cleanup events throughout Florida,
  - Supported the Black Bass Symposium for the 2025 National AFS Meeting with a \$1,000 donation.

Florida Chapter Meetings by the numbers:

Stats	2022	2023	2024	2025	Highest pre-2022
# registered	77	162	152	144	132 (virtual 2021) 97 (in-person 2019)
# institutions	12	22	24	24	
# students	31	47	41	39	
% students	40	30	27	27	
Total Presentations	47	106	93	88	
Oral	32	67	54	55	
Poster	15	39	39	33	
Raffle Earnings	\$2,774	\$4,276	\$4,281	\$4,936	

### **Outstanding Achievement Award Winner: John Davis**

For the past 18 years, John has been an indispensable part of the Fisheries Independent Monitoring (FIM) Program, demonstrating exceptional leadership, scientific expertise, and an unwavering commitment to fisheries research and conservation.

The FIM Program provides a critical long-term dataset for key estuaries across Florida, including Apalachicola, Cedar Key, Tampa Bay, Sarasota Bay, Charlotte Harbor, Indian River, and Jacksonville. Through various net sampling techniques, the program monitors fish populations informing management decisions statewide.

As a Principal Investigator, John plays a vital role in this effort. He leads monthly sampling trips, expertly conducting seine and trawl surveys, and ensuring the collection of high-quality scientific data. His deep knowledge and leadership have earned him the title of "Crew Member of the Year" 12 times, a testament to his reliability and excellence in the field. Additionally, he is committed to mentoring the next generation of fisheries scientists, training new employees to become Principal Investigators, and fostering an efficient and skilled research team.

Beyond his routine monitoring efforts, John recognized a critical data gap in The Everglades and Florida Bay ecosystems, which are facing rapid changes due to urbanization and altered hydrological patterns. Leveraging his expertise, he successfully secured funding to expand monitoring efforts in these under-researched areas. Over a three-year period, John led an ambitious effort to sample these systems twice a year, overseeing a total of 143 field days and 1,669 net pulls while personally participating in nearly 60 field days and over 800 of those net pulls. His deep understanding of the region, passion for conservation, and relentless dedication made this project a success, providing invaluable data for future management and conservation efforts.

John's contributions extend beyond the field. He is a passionate advocate for science education, actively participating in the Great American Teach-In in Pinellas County each year. Through this initiative, he engages with local students, educating future generations about the importance of fisheries research and conservation. His ability to connect with the public and inspire young minds reflects his dedication to both science and community engagement.

John exemplifies the highest standards of the fisheries profession, making original contributions to research, management, and public education. His leadership, dedication, and passion have left a lasting impact on the FIM Program, fisheries research in Florida, and the colleagues who have had the privilege of working alongside him.

### **Rich Cailteux Award Winner: Mike Allen**

As faculty at the Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences program at UF since 1997, and Director of the Nature Coast Biological Station since 2015, Mike has always had a passion for conducting and facilitating research that can directly improve management of aquatic systems. He has made significant advancements in quantitative fisheries science; developing field-based models that have practical application for decision making. His work has been instrumental in setting harvest policies and diagnosing potential overfishing for largemouth bass, black crappie, and spotted seatrout fisheries in Florida and throughout the southeast. Mike's seamless transition to developing age-structured fisheries models for marine species has involved collaborations with FWRI scientists and helped to inform harvest management decisions by FWC and the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Council.

Mike and his colleagues also studied the impacts of habitat, angling, and latitude on largemouth bass reproduction and recruitment in Florida. His research on iconic sport fish eventually expanded to address how changes in habitat quality and habitat management can influence fish populations and fish communities. Results of his research have been used by water management districts in setting minimum flow and level criteria for lake and river systems in Florida, as well as to inform water level and habitat management decisions in Florida lakes. Mike's research program has also elucidated management options for both invasive fishes (lionfish) and plants (hydrilla) in Florida. His work on hydrilla identified both habitat problems with hypoxia that occurs at high coverages, as well as benefits of moderate coverage to sportfish

and fish communities.

Mike has developed a research and teaching program at UF that has received national and international attention. He has chaired over 45 graduate students (13 PhD and 32 MS) and served as a faculty advisor for hundreds of other graduate students. Mike and his students have given over 250 presentations at regional, national, and international conferences. His students have received 34 awards while under his direction; many of which were *Roger Rottman Memorial Scholarships* or *Best Student Paper Awards* from the Florida Chapter AFS. At last count, Mike has authored and coauthored nearly 200 peer-reviewed papers in scientific journals and proceedings, and he has contributed chapters to or edited five fisheries books. Most of his publications have been highly cited works, due to their relevance to management across the US and beyond. His international studies resulted in 8 papers that addressed management of Murray cod fisheries in Australia and three papers that addressed management of the giant cichlid in Guatemala. Mike has also been a scholarly editor for three different journals and has refereed papers for about 20 different journals.

Mike has been actively involved at all levels of AFS since 1989 and became an *AFS Fellow* in 2020. He served as President of the Auburn University Student Chapter (1990-91), President of the Student Subsection of the Educational Section (1991-92), President of Florida Chapter (2004), and President of Southern Division (2013). He has also served on numerous AFS committees, including the Program co-chair of the 2017 AFS meeting in Tama, Nominating, Skinner Award, Publication Awards, and Time and Place Committees. Mike has also been a member of the Education Section and Fish Management Section since the early 1990s.

Mike has the ability and willingness to communicate complex issues at all levels, from the everyday angler to the highly technical scientist. This ability and his friendly, down-to-earth personality have allowed him to form strong partnerships and garner great respect from many within and outside the aquatic sciences profession.

Although Mike's management-directed research has been highly influential, his greatest impact is in the graduate students that have gone on to work in natural resource management and research, with many obtaining leadership positions in agencies across the U.S. In each of their individual capacities and roles, they are continuing his legacy of impacting natural resource management and conservation in positive, forward-thinking ways. This is truly a testament to Mike's invaluable contribution to the field of aquatic system management - yesterday, today, and into the future.