

The Shellcracker

FLORIDA CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY



December 2025

President's Message:

Hello Florida Chapter!

Here is your “mid-term” Shellcracker, only 6 months until the 2026 Annual Chapter Meeting! Are you curious how attending the annual Chapter meeting can benefit Chapter members? Check out the table below summarizing some results from the 2025 post-meeting Chapter survey. Also from the 2025 meeting: Keep an eye out in *Fisheries* magazine for the essay resulting from the “workflow” survey which summarizes your responses (we still don't know in which issue it will appear). Also from that survey, included in this Shellcracker but not the publication, is the full list of suggestions for “top ten essential personal field gear items.” Check it out, how does your list compare to the compiled Chapter list? Hopefully this list will help some aspiring, or even experienced, fisheries biologists in terms of field work preparation.

Various Chapter committees have been hard at work planning the 2026 annual meeting. New features planned include Day 2 breakout sessions at lunch, and a morning workshop on Day 3! There may be new incentives for volunteers for presentation judges and moderators. We also have new folks with new ideas working on trivia and the raffle/auction. Combine all this with a great symposium topic, lower meeting costs, extensive menu improvement efforts, and your excellent presentations; the 2026 meeting will be one you don't want to miss! We have made substantial progress on separating the Secretary and Treasurer positions and updating Chapter Bylaws and Procedures, stay tuned! Don't forget to check out the FL Chapter webpage for past workshop materials.

Reminder: time to renew your FL Chapter and National AFS memberships! Best to pay for FL Chapter dues through National. You get access to several publications, workshops/seminars, meeting discounts, and more. The 2026 Southern Division AFS meeting will be held March 5-8 in New Orleans! The Louisiana Chapter knows how to host a meeting, you won't want to miss this one either.

Hope you all have an excellent winter! Sincerely,
Steve Beck

President, Florida Chapter AFS





Getting in Touch

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Cameron Atkinson
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University Liaison

Tommy Domohowski
University of Florida
Email: Tommy.Domohowski@ufl.edu

Upcoming Events

March 5 – 8, 2026 :
AFS Southern Division
Meeting: New Orleans,
LA



Interested in contributing something to the Shellcracker? Email: Bridgette Froeschke at bfroeschke@ut.edu with any articles or information that you would like to be included in the next issue. Prize will be awarded for the best, and worst fish jokes submitted.

Getting Involved!

Committees Seeking members:

Award Committee

Rich Caiteux/Outstanding Achievement Awards
Eric Nagid
Eric.Nagid@myfwc.com

Continuing Education Committee

Planning future continuing education workshops
Allison Durland Donahou
adurland@flsouthern.edu
Rachel Liebman
rachel.liebman@myfwc.com

Membership Committee

New membership ideas in recruitment, retainment, and reactivation of members
Sara Menendez
Sara.Menendez@swfwmd.state.fl.us

Policy Committee

Keep members informed on local to national policy issues on aquatic resources
Ed Camp
edvcamp@ufl.edu

Community and Engagement Committee

Chelsey Crandall
Chelsey.Crandall@myfwc.com

Feature your research:

Shellcracker Newsletter

Feature articles or other AFS content
Bridgette Froeschke
bfroeschke@ut.edu

Website

Updates, articles, content
Jason O'Connor
Jason.Oconnor@myfwc.com

Student Scholarships and Travel Grants

Assistance with student scholarships and future scholarship opportunities:
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Dennis Panches Student Travel Grants:
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Student Sub-unit

Swag sales, blog updates, student chapter involvement
Angela Barreto
angela.barreto@icloud.com

Raffle/Silent Auction

Assistance with raffle collections, auction items
Sarah Torre
swebb2021@fau.edu

Bob Heagey
Robert.Heagey@MyFWC.com

John Davis
John.Davis@MyFWC.com

Positions

Code of Conduct Officer

Searching for officers to represent FL AFS code of conduct
Daniel Nelson
Daniel.Nelson@myfwc.com

Apprentice webmaster

Owen Bayindirli
Owen.bayindirli@myfwc.com

OR!

We are excited to invite you to share your favorite fishing stories and/or pictures for the next edition of the Shellcracker. Whether it's a tale of your biggest catch, an unforgettable fishing trip, or a moment that made you laugh, we want to hear about it! Please submit your stories and photos to bfroeschke@ut.edu. Your contributions will help make this edition truly special.



46th Annual Meeting of the Florida Chapter American Fisheries Society



We invite you to submit abstracts for the 46th annual meeting of the Florida Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. The meeting will take place May 12th-14th at the Guy Harvey Resort in St. Augustine Beach. We hope you can join us! **Registration Opens: Jan 1st, 2026.** The meeting format will be similar to previous years, notable changes include: single occupancy lodging available, tiki-bar socials (sorry no bonfire, but there are multiple gas firepits), and a beach!

The symposium topic will be:

“Progress and Priorities in Florida's Fisheries: What fisheries and aquatic science projects should we maintain or invest in to apply meaningful results and make positive impacts for the people, fish, and aquatic habitats in Florida? ”

As fisheries professionals and students who care deeply about Florida's fisheries, how do we create impactful goals for the near future and for generations to come? Which projects should we continue or begin so the results help provide a bright future for fisheries in Florida? We encourage oral and poster presentations related to the symposium topic but will also accept other fisheries and aquatic science topics.

Deadline for abstract submission and early registration:

Sunday, March 1st, 2026



AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

FLORIDA CHAPTER

ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION

MAY 12-14, 2026

Meeting Information

Meeting Details

The 2026 meeting will be held at the Guy Harvey Resort St. Augustine Beach. The address for the Resort is 860 A1A Beach Boulevard, St. Augustine Beach, FL, 32080. Maps and directions will be available in the next issue of the Shellcracker or can be found on the Guy Harvey Resort Website at <https://guyharveyresortstaugustinebeach.com/>

The meeting schedule will be similar to past years, beginning on Tuesday, May 12th at 1:00 pm with the *Progress and Priorities in Florida's Fisheries* symposium, followed by a poster session after dinner; the symposium will continue Wednesday morning, with the business meeting and raffle after dinner Wednesday night, and contributed papers on Thursday morning, followed by lunch and awards. **Based on Chapter feedback, several updates have been made, including an extended lunch on Day 2 to allow for breakout sessions, the Continuing Education Committee's workshop moving to the morning of Day 3, and an increase in lightning talks in place of full-length presentations. The extended lunch breakout sessions are intended to bring together participants with shared fisheries interests to identify current priorities across diverse fields, and the Executive Committee is seeking at least 10 facilitators; interested individuals should send discussion topics (e.g., *Snook Research* or *Age and Growth of Fishes*) to Summer, who will organize table signage for attendees.**

Registration

Registration period opens Jan 1st, 2026. The link for online registration will be provided via email. Registration includes all meals. State employees can discuss payment with their supervisor. Registrations will still be accepted at the meeting (late fees applied). We can accept VISA, MASTERCARD, AMEX, DISCOVER, cash, or check at the meeting.

	Early	Late
Full	\$260	\$290
Day 1 –2	\$220	\$250
Day 2 –3	\$195	\$225
Day 1	\$85	\$115
Day 2	\$135	\$165
Day 3	\$60	\$90

This link to the registration website will also be made available on our chapter's website at <https://units.fisheries.org/fl/>. There will be no mail-in registration forms this year, however, you can still mail a check for your meeting costs.

Lodging

A block of rooms has been reserved for this event and **you must make your own lodging arrangements with the Resort.** There are single or double bed options available for \$140 per night, and you must mention you are attending the American Fisheries Society meeting to get this rate.



AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY

FLORIDA CHAPTER

ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION

MAY 12-14, 2026

Meeting Information

Presentation Details

Abstract Submission Process

Abstracts will be submitted online via the [Abstract Submission Form](#) on the Florida Chapter website. [Florida Chapter Meeting Abstract Submission | Florida Chapter \(fisheries.org\)](#)

Abstract Submission Form Opens: January 1st, 2026

Abstract Submission **Deadline** (Oral and Poster Sessions) : March 1st, 2026

Oral Session:

Speakers will be given 20 minutes for full talks (15 minutes for presentations and 5 minutes for questions/discussion), speakers will be given 5 minutes for speed talks (no time allotted for questions/discussion). We will have PowerPoint on a laptop capable of accepting your presentation on a flash drive or other device.

Important note: Please use **widescreen PowerPoint slide format** for all presentations.

Poster Session:

All posters will be presented on Tuesday evening, May 12th and can be left up for the entire meeting. Posters should be no larger than 150 X 100 cm (60" X 40"), but they can be set up either as portrait or landscape format on an easel.

Opportunities for student support

As in previous years, student travel awards will be available for the annual meeting. The recipients will be notified by early February to allow for early registration. Master's and doctoral students are also eligible for the Roger Rottmann Memorial Scholarship. More information and the application materials are available on page 8 of the Newsletter.

2026 Student Raffle

We need your help to make this meeting's raffle a great one. If you are interested in helping or donating items, please email Sara Torre (swebb2021@fau.edu) or Bob Heagey (Robert.Heagey@MyFWC.com). Remember all proceeds fund our student travel grants for the following year's meeting. Please contact us to get involved!

We look forward to seeing everyone in St. Augustine Beach for our 2026 annual meeting!



Student Travel Grants

We encourage students to attend and participate in our annual meeting, and we offer a number of travel grants each year to offset meeting attendance costs for students. We endeavor to support all students who apply, but in the event of funding limitations, priority will be given to students who have not previously received a Florida Chapter Student Travel Grant.

If you plan to apply for the student travel grant you must:

1. Be member of the FL Chapter in good standing ([how to join](#))
2. Register for the FL Chapter annual meeting
3. Submit a [Student Travel Grant Application](#)

We recommend preparing the required “Rivers to Reefs” Essay prior to starting application because it is not possible to save incomplete applications and return to them at a later time. [More information on the essay requirement here.](#)

Application Deadline: January 9th

Question regarding the student travel grants should be directed to:

Allison Durland Donahou, Ph.D.
Florida Southern College
adurland@flsouthern.edu

and

David Kerstetter, Ph.D.
Nova Southeastern University
kerstett@nova.edu

ICK: Invasive and Cichlid Kids Fishing Tournament

The third annual **ICK: Invasive and Cichlid Kids Fishing Tournament** was hosted by Dr. Bridgette Froeschke's Spatial Ecology Lab at The University of Tampa and brought conservation, education, and community engagement together on the waters of Tampa Bay. This hands-on event welcomed more than 50 youth participants ages 4–16 and 20 dedicated adult volunteers, all united by a shared goal: learning about Florida's aquatic ecosystems while actively helping remove invasive fish species.



The tournament focused on increasing awareness of invasive species and their ecological impacts through experiential learning. Young anglers targeted non-native fishes such as Mayan cichlids, gaining firsthand knowledge of how invasive species affect native habitats and fisheries. Lab members and volunteers supported participants throughout the event, assisting with fish identification, removal, and discussions about broader environmental challenges facing Florida's waters.

Beyond fishing, the tournament featured interactive educational stations highlighting native and invasive species, water quality, and habitat conservation. These activities were designed to inspire curiosity, build environmental literacy, and empower youth to become future stewards of Florida's natural resources. The continued success of the ICK tournament underscores its growing role as a meaningful outreach and education event that blends community involvement with invasive species management.



Call for Thesis and Dissertation Highlights

Call for Thesis & Dissertation Highlights

Are you defending your thesis or dissertation this semester? We want to celebrate your work!

The Shellcracker is inviting graduate students to submit their **thesis or dissertation defense dates** and/or a **brief summary of their research** to be featured in an upcoming issue. This is a great opportunity to highlight your hard work, share your research with the broader community, and recognize this important milestone.

To be featured, please submit:

- Your name and program
- Thesis or dissertation title
- Defense date, time, and location (if public)
- A short summary of your research (150–250 words)



Please email all submissions to **Bridgette Froeschke** at bfroeschke@ut.edu

We look forward to showcasing the outstanding research and achievements of our graduate students!

Responses from the 2025 Post-Meeting Chapter Surveys

Responses from the 2025 Post-Meeting Chapter Survey Question: “How has attending annual FL Chapter meetings helped your fisheries career? Check all that apply.”

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above; attending meetings has not helped my career	0.00%	0
My knowledge of FL Fisheries research and management has improved	93.18%	41
I saw a poster and/or presentation that improved my project	50.00%	22
I saw a poster and/or presentation that led to a new project	15.91%	7
I had conversations that improved my project	68.18%	30
I had conversations that led to a new project	34.09%	15
I met future project partners/collaborators	61.36%	27
I found good contacts for subject matter experts	72.73%	32
I had conversations that led to a new job	4.55%	2
I had conversations that led to advanced degrees	11.36%	5
I got to spend quality time with current/former colleagues	93.18%	41
Other (please specify):	Responses	2.27%
Total Respondents: 44		



Responses from the 2025 Post-Meeting Chapter Surveys

RESPONSES FROM THE 2025 PRE-MEETING CHAPTER SURVEY QUESTION: “What are your “must have” recommendations for personal field gear/equipment?” Ten answers per person possible. Responses (44 individuals) manually sorted into categories, name brands and unrelated responses removed.

ITEM	COMMENTS	RESPONSES
sunglasses	polarized, high quality	27
sunscreen		19
appropriate footwear	deck boots, trail shoes, boat shoes, tall boots, sandals, non-slip, waterproof socks, breathable	18
water/bottle	water: more than needed/cold. bottle: half gallon, 40oz, insulated, high quality, backpack style	18
performance shirt/pants	sun-protection, quick-dry, longleeve, hooded shirt, comfort improves efficiency	17
hat	extra hats, good baseball cap	16
dry bag/pack/bucket	mesh outer pocket, light color, backpack style, 5 gal bucket w/ screwtop	14
water resistant data sheets/ notepad	extra sheets	12
rain jacket/pants	works for wind too, breathable	11
buff	support FL-AFS student subunit	10
food	main meals, extra snacks, granola/protein bars	10
first aid kit		9
knife/multitool	high quality	9
gloves	heavy duty blue-palm, fingerless, or sun gloves	5
cell phone	waterproof case, camera	4
cooler	ice, small, collapsable	4
medicine	prescription, pain relief, anti-histamine, anti-nausea	4
watch	waterproof	4
bug spray	eucalyptus for yellow flies	3
chapstick		3
clipboard		3
disinfectant gel/alcohol wipes	first aid, lens cleaning	3
flashlight/headlamp		3
hearing protection		3
life jacket		3
measuring board		3
peronal locator beacon		3
tools/toolbox		3
change of clothes (socks)		2
feminine personal items		2
compass		2
digital scale		2
extras of everything		2
matches/lighter		2
water quality meter		2
waterproof camera/video recorder		2
5 gallon bucket		1
backup battery/solar charger		1
bag of random screws/washers		1
bear spray		1
belt		1
bibs		1
cable/zip-ties		1
carts / wagons		1
cold brew coffee		1
computer/tablet		1
cooling towel		1
dissecting tools		1
dive computer		1
diving safety sausage		1
duct tape		1
equipment case	rigid, waterproof	1
extensive literature and reference needs		1
firearm		1
folding chairs		1
hand warmers		1
mask w/ neoprene strap		1
microscopes		1
miniature fire extinguisher		1
music		1
pencils		1
physical maps/charts	not-digital	1
plankton nets		1
rubber bands		1
shade		1
sharpie		1
silicone ring	prevents degloving	1
spare boat plug		1
stainless steel clips		1
storage envelopes		1
storage jars, etc. and preservatives		1
surface marker buoy and reel		1
wi-fi hotspot		1

