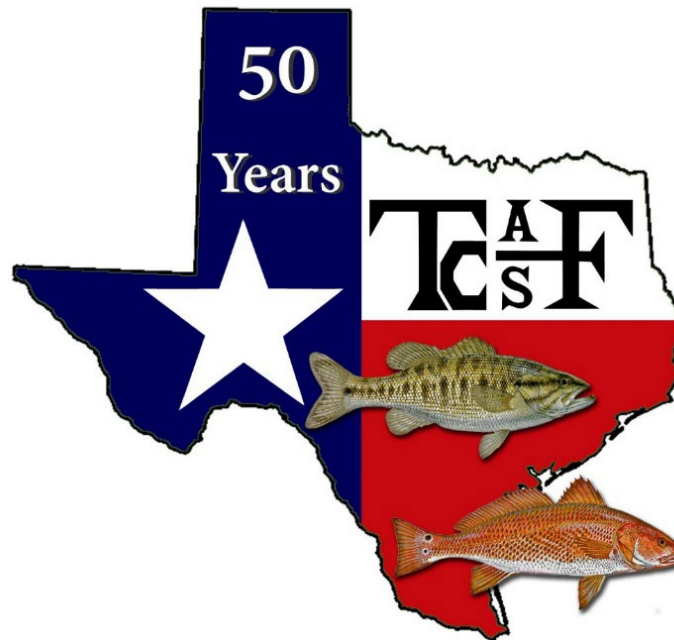


American Fisheries Society, Southern Division of the AFS,  
and Texas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society  
Historical Sketch

By Raymond Mathews, Archivist/Historian



### **Introduction**

As the Chapter has now reached its 50<sup>th</sup> year as a member of the American Fisheries Society, we are going to look back over the years to see how the Chapter has grown and how the membership has worked together to accomplish the mission of the parent society. To do this, first we needed to look at the American Fisheries Society and the Southern Division and see how the Texas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society and its members fit into the larger groups. In addition, Pre-TCAFS Pictorial History is provided. The Highlights of the history of the TCAFS follows next. The chronology of events from the first meeting in 1975 to 2025. The AFS Certification of the Texas Chapter was received in 1976. The 50-Year History of the TCAFS will include the history updated through the year 2026 because of the AFS parent organization Certification in that year.



## American Fisheries Society Historical Sketch

The American Fisheries Society (AFS) is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation that was founded in 1870 as “The American Fish Culturist Association” by some two hundred private fish culturists. This was one year before the federal government got involved in fisheries. The AFS is the oldest and largest professional society in North America representing fisheries scientists. AFS promotes scientific research and enlightened management of resources for the optimum use and enjoyment by the public. It also encourages comprehensive education for fisheries scientists and continuing on-the-job training.

AFS organizes scientific meetings where new results are reported and discussed. In addition to these primary functions, the Society has many other programs in areas such as professional certification, international affairs, public affairs, and public information. Additional information about the Society is available at their web site at the following: [Texas Chapter - American Fisheries Society](#).

The AFS was formed because of concerns for declining populations of salmon and trout in many eastern U.S. lakes and streams. In 1884, the members voted to change the name to the “American Fisheries Society,” to become more clearly aligned with European fisheries organizations. The AFS was organized by lay conservationists and fish culturists and has never had educational or professional requirements for membership. Nevertheless, nearly all the present-day members are fisheries scientists. For the first 80 years growth was slow but steady, and by 1949 the membership had reached 1,000, doubled by 1959, doubled again by 1966, doubled again by 1980, and now there are 8,231 members. In the mid-1950’s, to become more responsive to its membership, the AFS was divided into four geographical Divisions, and each was given its own officers. The four Divisions are the Southern (including Texas), Northeastern, North Central, and Western. Division Presidents belong to the parent society’s Executive Committee.

Local Chapters began organizing in 1962, and there are now more than 100 chapters, divisions, student subunits, and sections that carry out the mission of the Society. In Texas we have two Chapters: 1) Texas A&M Chapter and 2) Texas Chapter. Chapters elect their own officers and establish their own dues. You can belong to a chapter without joining the parent society, but you cannot hold an office or chair a committee in the Texas Chapter without being a member of the parent society.

Because of the diversity of different fields that were developing in fishery science and at the request from the membership, the parent society started establishing various sections because of disciplinary interest, as listed below:

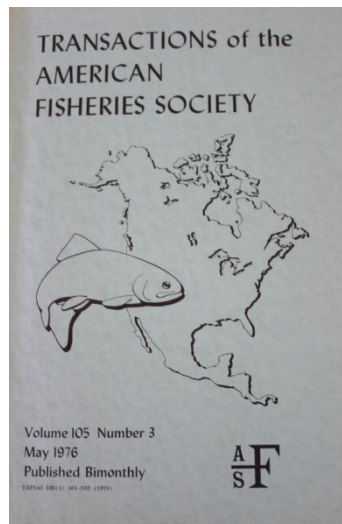
- |                             |                         |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Fish Health              | 6. Exotic Fish          |
| 2. Fish Culture             | 7. Water Quality        |
| 3. Early Life History       | 8. Fisheries Management |
| 4. Fisheries Administrators | 9. Marine Fisheries     |
| 5. Fisheries Educators      | 10. Bio-Engineering     |

**The Texas Chapter officially received its Charter to the AFS in 1976, and we are celebrating 50 years as a Chapter of the AFS. However, the Texas Chapter of the AFS had its first organized meeting in November 1975 at Texas A&M University in College Station, and so for all practical purposes the Chapter is celebrating its 50 Year Anniversary in 2025.**

Sections elect their own officers and establish their own dues. Sections with 200 or more members are given voting rights in the parent society's Executive Committee. A member can belong to more than one Section.

The AFS publishes some of the world's leading fisheries research journals, which include those listed below:

Transactions	Started in 1872	6 issues/year
North American Journal of Aquaculture	Started in 1934	Quarterly
Special Publications & Monographs	Started in 1970	As Available
Fisheries Bulletin	Started in 1976	Bi-monthly
North American Journal of Fisheries Management	Started in 1981	Quarterly
Membership Directory	Started in 1982	Annually
Journal of Aquatic Animal Health	Started in 1990	Quarterly



Cover of the TRANSACTIONS of the AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY, May 1976

## Chapters/Divisions/Sections

The American Fisheries Society has three categories of membership to facilitate the local, regional, and specialty interest of its members. These categories have evolved over the 131-year history of the Society. The mission of each category is described below, based on the AFS web site at [Texas Chapter - American Fisheries Society](#).

### Chapters

The mission of Chapters within the American Fisheries Society is to advance Society goals by coordinating member activities related to information exchange, outreach, and aquatic stewardship within their geographic region, including coordinating with appropriate local, provincial, and state-level government and non-government agencies and organizations. Chapters serve member needs in local and provincial/state areas and represent those needs to the Division leadership.

### Divisions

The mission of Divisions within the American Fisheries Society is to advance Society goals by coordinating and complementing Chapter activities related to information exchange, outreach, aquatic stewardship, and governance at a regional level, and to maintain a liaison role with regional resource stakeholders. Divisions serve member needs in large geographic areas by coordinating with provincial and state-level agencies and organizations, and among AFS units, and representing Chapter needs to the AFS leadership (i.e., Society officers, Executive Director, and Governing Board members).

### Sections

The mission of Sections within the American Fisheries Society is to advance Society goals by coordinating activities of members with similar disciplinary and topical interests, by stimulating information exchange and outreach related to those interests, and by providing expertise to AFS and other users. Sections serve member needs without geographic limits and represent member needs to the AFS leadership, particularly as they relate to the discipline or topical area. Sections may work with geographically based AFS units to address specific member needs.

### **Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society\***

**\*From the Southern Division Web Site: [The Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society](#)  
by John F. Dequine**



**The Texas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (TCAFS) is a member of the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society (SDAFS), and thus our history is deeply rooted in both the SDAFS and the parent society.**

The Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society (SDAFS) ironically originated in the western U.S. at the Denver, Colorado meeting of AFS in September 1947, based on “An abbreviated history of the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society” by John F. Dequine, 2001, which may be found in more complete form at the following web site: [The Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society](http://sdafs.org/history/) . The historical account of the Southern



Division is taken directly from that report, and is reported here in part, since the Texas Chapter is a member of the Southern Division AFS, and part of our history is rooted in both the Southern Division and the parent society. At the meeting in Denver, the AFS members from the southern states recognized the time limitations and inadequate attention to regional issues. They decided there was a need for a forum to discuss regional issues, such as research findings and management concerns.

**SDAFS Founders: Jack Dequine (left), Ed Hueske (center) and Harry Cornell (right) (<http://sdafs.org/history/>)**

Members from eight southern states decided to pursue a forum focusing on their regional issues. The organizers of this forum included Jack Chance (TN), Minor Clark (KY), John Dequine (FL), R. W. Eschmeyer (TVA), Nelson Gowanloch (LA), Joe Hogan (AR), Willis King (NC), Homer Swingle (AL), Marion Toole (TX) and possibly others whose names are lost.



## Southern Division News



Southern Division  
of the  
American Fisheries  
Society



Vote soon!	5	Save the Date	8	Updates	29
Candidate biographies for SD Vice President and Student Rep.		Mark your calendar for upcoming professional meetings!		Chapters, committees, and subunits tell us what they've been up to.	

### The President's Message: What does the AFS mean to you?

Dennis Riecke, SDAFS President

It is hard for me to believe that by the time you read this, six months have passed since our very successful 2015 spring meeting in Savannah, Georgia. I am honored and pleased to serve as your SDAFS President. What does the AFS mean to you? What comes to mind when you think about your involvement with your professional society? How would you describe the AFS to a colleague? How would

you market or sell the AFS to them? Would you encourage them to participate and join if they were not already members? Do you value your membership? If so, what would you list as valuable membership benefits and activities? Have you been an active member or a passive member? Have you taken the opportunities to volunteer to help out on a project, or to serve as a chapter or

**AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY** AFS

Alabama	Puerto Rico
Arkansas	South Carolina
Florida	Tennessee
Georgia	Texas
Kentucky	Virginia
Louisiana	Washington D.C.
Maryland	West Indian
Mississippi	Islands
North Carolina	West Virginia
Oklahoma	

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**Cover of *Fisheries*, Vol. 40, No. 7, July 2015, formerly called the *Fisheries Bulletin*, monthly AFS publication.**

According to John F. Dequine, during the 1940's, **fish and game directors** of the Southeastern Game, Fish and Conservation Commissioners (SEGFC) **met annually** to discuss federal regulations, legislation and other mutual problems. Each state had a fisheries sub-unit with one or more members of AFS, many of whom accompanied their directors to provide technical advice on policy and other matters. It seemed logical to expand the directors' meeting to include a meeting of fishery workers. When approached, the directors enthusiastically endorsed the concept and authorized participation by their personnel.

**Organization proceeded rapidly.** The **first conference** was held at the SEGFC meeting in St. Petersburg, FL in November 1947. The Southeastern Section of The Wildlife Society (SSTWS) joined the movement and held joint and concurrent programs. The resulting "marriage" of the technical sessions of fish and game professionals with the SEGFC was established then and has continued to date. Without the wholehearted encouragement of the directors, the evolution of both SDAFS and SSTWS would have been delayed or seriously handicapped.

Subsequent meetings were held in Lexington, KY (Nov. '48), Nags Head, NC (Oct. '49), Richmond, VA (Oct. '50), and Biloxi, MS (Oct. '51). At the Biloxi meeting, the attendees elected officers and instructed them to proceed with the formation of a Southern Division. The geographical region encompassed the eleven states of the SEGFC (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN & VA) plus OK, TX and the West Indian islands. The necessary **petition was**

**submitted to the parent society and accepted at its annual meeting in Dallas, TX in September 1952.** Maryland, West Virginia, and Washington DC joined in later years.

The **first official session of the SDAFS** followed in October 1952 at Savannah, GA. Forty-some fishery workers representing all states in the Southern Division, academia, USFWS, and other federal agencies were registered. Officers were elected, five committees were appointed, resolutions were passed, and the mechanics of official operation began. A policy of encouraging more effective presentations and discouraging the reading of formal papers was adopted by resolution; it set the tone for many successive meetings.

**Early programs** featured informal presentations, open discussions, and field demonstrations of projects in progress by the host state. Unfortunately, numerical growth in attendance has made the logistics of those arrangements difficult if not impossible to replicate. The camaraderie and one-on-one exchanges of information they permitted are sorely missed. According to John Dequine (Southern Division AFS Historian), based on his long association with the Southern Division, the major strength of the Division has been and remains the intensely motivated professionals who have comprised its membership.

Activation of the Dingell-Johnson Act in July 1951 increased attendance as fishery staff grew. Registered attendance was recorded as 107 in 1960 and 161 in 1970 (subsequent minutes do not always reflect attendance numbers). Other evidence of expanded activity may be seen in the number of standing committees: 10 in 1960, 14 in 1970, and 19 in 1980. By 1992, there were 23 standing committees listing a total of 345 members!

Valuable assets of the Southern Division have always been the work of its committees and its contributions to the policies and operation of AFS. **Some of our more notable committees and dates of their establishment are listed below:**

- 1958 Reservoir and Pollution Committees
- 1963 Local Chapters and Past Presidents Committees
- 1966 Trout Committee
- 1967 Awards Committee
- 1968 Striped Bass Committee
- 1973 Fish Disease Committee
- 1974 Warm Water Streams Committee
- 1980 Marine and Estuarine Resources Committee
- 1987 Small Impoundments Committee
- 1991 Aquaculture Committee

Many challenges have been accepted by the SDAFS since its inception. Its members combined their talents and energy to initiate and/or labor for many accomplishments, innovations and improvements in the operation of the Society over the years. The list below **highlights some of their efforts:**

- 1953 Revision of the antiquated system of voting for offices in the parent society
- 1956 Encouragement of recognition and funding for warmwater commercial fisheries research and development

- 1957 Certification of fisheries biologists
- 1963 Encouragement of participation by marine biologists
- 1964 Establishment of local chapters  
Employment of an Executive Secretary of AFS
- 1965 Douglas Lake Cove Rotenone Study
- 1967 Reservoir Fisheries Symposium
- 1970 Publication of 1970 Monetary Values of Fish and Fish Kill Counting Procedures
- 1976 Publication of Guidelines for Striped Bass Culture
- 1978 Barkley Lake Rotenone Study
- 1982 Revision and publication of AFS Special Publication: Monetary Values of Freshwater Fish and Fishkill Counting Guidelines
- 1987 Publication of Warmwater Streams Symposium
- 1990 Publication of Brown Trout Workshop: Biology and Management
- 1991 FISHHAB '91 Symposium, Fisheries Habitat Utilization: Seagrass Beds
- 1992 Revision and publication of AFS Special Publication 24: Investigation and Valuation of Fish Kills

## **General Session**

### **A 50-year History of the Southern Division American Fisheries Society**

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*Abstract:* We evaluated the accomplishments of the past 50 years of the Southern Division American Fisheries Society (SDAFS). We used minutes from the Southern Division annual meetings and various records to view past issues addressed by the division and activities of the SDAFS technical committees and chapters, and the evolution of the SDAFS annual meeting. Since its formation in 1952, the SDAFS has grown to about 2,000 members with 8 active technical committees, 20 chapters, and 8 student units. Issues addressed by the SDAFS have included a diversity of conservation and management issues including support for some concepts that would likely not be popular today such as intentional introduction of exotic fishes and proposing the sale of game fishes. The technical committees were the primary source of interstate coordination within the SDAFS with work including large-scale field projects, published symposia, and many compilations of data and reports. Due to the many products and accomplishments over the past 50 years, the SDAFS has set a high standard of excellence in the profession. Recruiting new anglers from urban areas may be among the greatest challenge facing fisheries managers in the next 50 years.

Proc. Annu. Conf. Southeast. Assoc. Fish and Wildl. Agencies 56:1-16

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On 21-24 February 2002, the Southern Division American Fisheries Society (SDAFS) celebrated its 50-year anniversary with a special plenary session and a poster session at the SDAFS spring meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas (Noble and Pine 2002). We summarized the SDAFS history with particular emphasis on issues and accomplishments from 1952-2002. A look back at the past 50 years provides snapshots of how fisheries management and aquaculture evolved in the southeastern

2002 Proc. Annu. Conf. SEAFWA

**Article from the 2002 Proceedings of the Annual Southeast Association  
of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (56:1-16).**

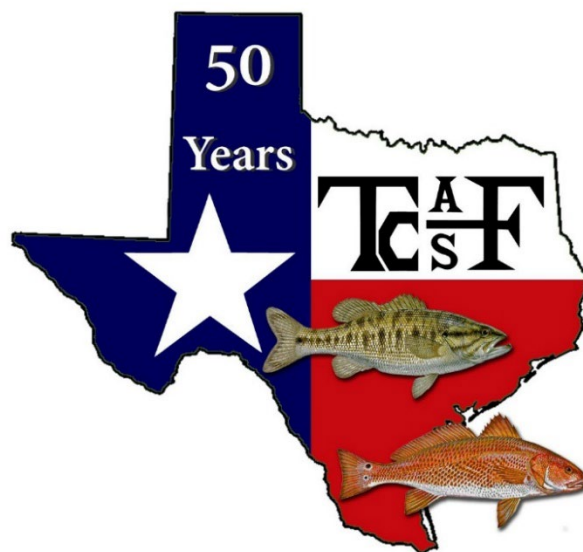
## Texas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society History

**Membership** has ranged from 83 charter members to nearly 250. Presently, the Texas Chapter has **thirteen standing committees**, which include Awards, Continuing Education, Editorial, Newsletter, Endowments, Internet, Issues, Membership, Nominating, Pond Management, Publicity and Exhibits, Student Outreach, and Archivist.

Each year the Chapter hosts an **annual meeting**, which typically is comprised of technical sessions, a panel discussion, vendor displays, banquet, and a business meeting. The technical sessions typically include about twenty scientific papers. Fundraising auctions and raffles have also been an important element of the annual meetings, with proceeds going toward the funding of student scholarships.

The Chapter publishes a **quarterly newsletter**, and which is used to publish an annual Texas Fisheries Workers Directory (discontinued in 1996). Special publications, such as “Texas Farm Ponds: Stocking, Assessment, and Management Recommendations” have also been published in the past. Proceedings **of the Annual Chapter Meeting** are also published each year (became non-gray literature in 1991), which includes all the technical papers that were submitted and reviewed for publication.

Awards may be given annually to “**The Outstanding Texas Fisheries Worker of the Year**” in nine categories, which include Fisheries Administration, Fish Culture, Fisheries Management, Fisheries Research, Fisheries Education, Technical Support, Fisheries Student, Outstanding Student Subunit (new for 2025), and Special Recognition in Fisheries Work. Awards for **Outstanding Presentation** at the Chapter meeting are also given. **Student scholarships** may also be awarded each year.



Recognition in Fisheries Work. Awards for **Outstanding Presentation** at the Chapter meeting are also given. **Student scholarships** may also be awarded each year.

## TEXAS CHAPTER AMERICAN FISHERIES SOCIETY PURPOSE AND GOALS

The general purposes and responsibilities of the Texas Chapter are as follows:

1. Support AFS Parent Society objectives. Specifically:
  - A. Promote the conservation, development, and wise use of the fisheries;
  - B. Promote and evaluate the development and advancement of all branches of fisheries science and practice;
  - C. Gather and disseminate to Society members and the general public scientific, technical, and other information about fisheries science and practice through publications, meetings, and other forms of communication; and
  - D. Encourage the teaching of fisheries science and practice in colleges and universities and the continuing education and development of fisheries professionals.
2. As the smallest geographically defined unit recognized as being operationally independent in the Society's Constitution, a Chapter shares the purposes of the Society but is intended to advance the Society's objectives over a more localized area than the Divisions, in this case, within the state of Texas.
3. The Texas Chapter generally provides for interaction among professionals within Texas. The Texas Chapter is a unit of the Southern Division.
4. Facilitate communication among members (by newsletters and other means) regarding fisheries science issues and the conduct of the fisheries profession within the Chapter's region.
5. Hold meetings, publish works, and perform other activities on a technical and semi-technical level that advance the status and performance of the fisheries profession within the Chapter's region.
6. Determine the views of members relative to professional topics affecting their performance, for example, by conducting surveys and considering resolutions.
7. Present the views of Chapter members to the Division membership, the AFS membership, and to the general public and government agencies within the Chapter's boundaries.
8. Hold annual meetings at which all Bylaw responsibilities are carried out.
9. Serve as technical and professional advisors to government agencies within the Chapter's region.
10. Promote the fisheries profession within the Chapter's boundaries through active and positive relations with journalists, government officials, special interest groups, other professional organizations, and the general public.
11. Promote proper use of aquatic resources by initiating and participating in special projects that increase public awareness, expand participation, improve habitat, and protect fragile resources.