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Southeastern Fishes Council

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Minutes, Business Meeting, 35th Annual Meeting, Southeastern Fishes Council

Business Meeting 35th Annual Meeting Southeastern Fishes Council November 12th & 13th, 2009 Guntersville State Park, AL

The 2009 business meeting of the Southeastern Fishes Council was called to order by Chair Bernie Kuhajda at 4:43 p.m. Eighty-nine people were in attendance.

Secretary's Report

Rebecca Blanton announced that minutes from the 2008 business meeting were approved unanimously and posted on the SFC website. Twenty-nine members submitted votes by email.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Anna George presented SFC's financial standing, noting that membership growth had led to an increase in the society's budget. She reported that the starting balance as of 1 January 2009 was \$17,386.53 and at the time of the meeting was \$30,524.07. She noted that this amount did not include deductions or revenues associated with the 2009 meeting or the mailing and printing of the 2009 Proceedings.

Treasurer George supplied the membership with a summary of the 2009 meeting cost reporting the following: In 2009, registration payments were \$8730 with an additional \$1850 from the World Wildlife Fund. Coffee mug sales were estimated at \$900 resulting in a total meeting revenue of \$11,480. Treasurer George indicated that presently, approximately \$5,048.72 had been spent on meeting costs indicating an overall profit for 2009.

Treasurer George thanked the World Wildlife Fund for their continued financial support.

Committee Reports

Program & Meeting Site Committee – Jim Williams and Anna George

Jim Williams presented information on the geographic location of the majority of the membership and discussed the committee's desire to continue to hold annual meetings at venues as centrally located as possible. He presented a map of member zip codes that illustrated the central location of the geographic distribution of members was very close to Guntersville, AL.

Williams also announced that the location of the 2010 annual meeting would be held in Athens, GA on the 11th and 12th November. He and Mary Freeman agreed to serve as co-Chairs for its planning. He reminded the membership that in 2011 we would return to Chattanooga, TN. David Etnier asked if a meeting location had been chosen in Athens. Mary Freeman responded that it would be at Convention Center in downtown Athens.

Anna George agreed to serve as chair of the meeting site committee for the 2011 meeting in Chattanooga, but requested someone volunteer to serve as co-Chair. Williams polled the membership for their opinion of the state park as a meeting site; the majority of the members were pleased with the location and facilities. He indicated that we would likely use their facilities again in the future.

Constitution Committee

Chair Kuhajda announced that the Constitution Committee proposed that three new committees, the Membership Committee, the Website Committee, and the Meeting Site Committee, be officially incorporated into the society's constitution. He indicated that the society had approved these committees in 2006, but they were never incorporated into the constitution. He called for a vote to incorporate them into the constitution; the membership agreed unanimously to accept this action.

Resolution Committee – nothing reported.

Proceedings Committee – Editor, Marty O'Connell; Associate Editor, Chris Skelton

Editor O'Connell told the membership that he had hoped to have the 2009 Proceedings out prior to the meeting, but noted the large size of the 2009 issue. Brett Albanese asked if state reports would continue to be included in the printed copy of the Proceedings only or if these could also be posted on the website. The membership discussed these alternatives and agreed to post them on the SFC website.

Awards Committee – Gerry Dinkins and Anna George

Dinkins presented the "Most Fecund" award to Ginny Adams (University of Central Arkansas) for bringing the most students to the meeting and the "Most Vagile" award to Noah Greenwald for the greatest distance traveled to

attend the meeting. George presented gifts to the outgoing Chair, Bernie Kuhajda and outgoing Editor, Marty O'Connell to express the society's appreciation of their service.

Technical Advisory Committee – nothing reported

Membership Committee – *Rebecca Blanton Johansen*

Rebecca Blanton provided a summary of the overall membership for the society for 2007- 2009 and presented the following to those attending the business meeting:

2009: 167 total members (institutional and individual) including:

4 life members (2%)

119 regular members (71%)

Includes 2 library (1%) and 4 (2%) family memberships

44 student members (27%)

2008: 192 total members (institutional and individual) including:

- 4 life members (2% of membership)

- 129 regular members (67%)

- 59 student members (31%)

2007: Total of 79 members (institutional and individual) including:

- 4 life members (5% of membership)

- 64 regular members (81%)

- 11 student members (14%)

She noted that the 2009 numbers did not reflect new or renewed memberships paid at the time of the meeting.

Website Committee – *Jake Schaefer and Noel Burkhead*

Jake Schaefer asked for volunteers to assist in helping with revisions of the new website and asked that anyone interested in helping contact him. He also announced the new website address: <http://ichthyology.usm.edu/sfc/>.

Nominating Committee – *Gerry Dinkins*

Dinkins announced nominations for the new editor of the Proceedings included David Neely and the nominations for Chair Elect included Carol Johnston and David Eisenhour. He also indicated that Rebecca Blanton and Anna George had agreed to serve another term in their current positions as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. Chair Kuhajda asked if there were other nominations for these positions. No other nominations were made. Chair Kuhajda called for a vote to close nominations, the society agreed unanimously.

Election of Officers

Chair Kuhajda put forth a motion to keep George and Blanton in their current positions and to elect Neely as the new editor. The motion passed unanimously.

Gerry Dinkins presented background information on the two candidates for new Chair-elect, David Eisenhour (Morehead State University) and Carol Johnston (Auburn University) and opened the floor for other nominations. No other nominations were made, he moved to close the floor, and the membership agreed to do so unanimously. Carol Johnston was elected as the new Chair-elect.

Old Business

1. Status of Electronic Only Proceedings

Chair Kuhajda opened the floor for further discussion of converting the Proceedings to an electronic only format. Mel Warren proposed that if we did not want to go entirely to an electronic only format, that removing the state reports from the printed version and publishing those electronically would help reduce cost and paper usage. Jim Williams supported the idea of only publishing the state reports electronically, but said that he would like to see the Proceedings remain in a paper format or at least retain the option of a paper copy.

Brett Albanese also supported the idea of moving the state reports to an electronic format arguing that in their current state they are not dynamic; Anna George said this was because much of what is submitted gets cut to conserve space and reduce costs. She argued that if they were published on the web, more information and the fun aspects of work going on in various states could be reported.

Chris Skelton asked for volunteers to take over as assistant editor of the Proceedings and asked that anyone interested contact him to discuss obligations of this position.

Chris also noted that one benefit of having the Proceedings available electronically would be that they could be included in searchable databases. However, he and Anna noted that the cost of having the Proceedings available through BioOne was too expensive. Skelton asked if once the Proceedings were uploaded to the SFC website if they were available to everyone or just current SFC members. Chair Kuhajda said that those more than a year old were accessible by all; others require a password to access, which is given to current SFC members. Jake Schaefer pointed out that the older Proceedings were scanned copies and thus not searchable documents, but newer ones were posted as pdf documents and would be searchable. Wayne Starnes asked how the format of the Proceedings related to library distribution. Chair Kuhajda replied that having the journal in an electronic format and included in some type of searchable database would certainly increase its legitimacy and likely lead to more library circulation.

2. Formal Partnership with SARP:

The membership briefly revisited the decision to form a formal partnership with SARP. The decision was made to have one or more SFC representatives attend and help guide decisions and plans generated by the SARP Imperiled Fishes and Aquatic Species Recovery Workgroup. At the time of the meeting, a representative had not been selected.

3. State reports to replace regional reports:

Chair Kuhajda noted that this action required a constitutional change, which was previously completed and that state reports, rather than regional reports, would be the standard format used going forward.

New Business**1. List of Southeastern fishes now posted on SFC webpage:**

Chair Kuhajda announced that a list of Southeastern fishes was now posted on the SFC website.

2. History (1992 to present) of SFC officers, meeting places, etc.:

Chair Kuhajda noted that Gerry Dinkins was near completion in his efforts to compile a list of historical information on SFC that would be posted on the website. Hank Bart said he had archived data with historical SFC information and volunteered to send this to Gerry to help complete this task.

3. Presence of SFC Executive Committee at recent AFS meeting in Nashville, TN (2009):

Chair Kuhajda told the membership that SFC had set up a booth at the 2009 American Fisheries Society meeting held in Nashville, TN. This was done in an attempt to share information about SFC and attract new members. Ten new members joined SFC during this time. Additionally, SFC t-shirts were sold. Funds were used to alleviate the cost of the booth at AFS.

4. USFWS 5-year Status Reviews:

Chair Kuhajda announced that the USFWS was undertaking their five-year status reviews which included several fish species of interest to the society. He encouraged the membership to review the species on the list and encouraged SFC member participation in this process.

5. SARP and SFC:

Will Duncan requested further discussion of our potential partnership with SARP. Mel Warren asked Will to give his opinion on what he thinks SFC's influence would be on SARP's steering committee. Will noted that this was a good question, but his impression was that they were very interested in having SFC's input and thus our potential to influence decisions may be

very good. Brett Albanese asked what SFC's actual commitment would be. Chair Kuhajda said that the idea was to have SFC members serve on SARP committees and attend their meetings. He also suggested that we encourage SARP to attend annual SFC meetings to get expert advice on species conservation and recovery plan actions.

Steve Walsh suggested that SFC's Technical Advisory Committee serve as advisor to SARP. It was noted however, that there was currently no one serving on this committee and it would have to be re-activated, but would be a good way to interact with SARP. Walsh stated that the committee could act as an imperiled species work group.

Will Duncan asked what SARP could do to formalize the proposed partnership with SFC. Hank Bart suggested that the SFC executive committee draft a memorandum of understanding that would be sent out to the membership for a vote.

6. Petition to list aquatic species by Center for Biodiversity

Chair Kuhajda explained to the members that the Center for Biodiversity (CBD) had plans to petition USFWS to list 88 southeastern fish species and that Noah Greenwald (CBD) had requested SFC's input on the matter. Chair Kuhajda expressed his concern that many of the species on their petition list were not under immediate threat of extinction and should not be included. He felt that including all 88 species would be a waste of USFWS resources and distract from their efforts of listing those that truly warranted immediate protection. He asked the membership to review the list of species which CBD intended to include on the petition and provide expert feedback as to those that should be removed and those that should be included.

Anna George asked that we clarify and discuss what SFC's role in species petitions should be. Mel Warren noted that none of us had seen the list, which Chair Kuhajda confirmed, and thus this topic was impossible to really discuss. Mel suggested re-activating the Technical Advisory Committee, have this committee get a copy of the list and share with the SFC membership and request feedback and eventually have the membership vote on the list.

Jim Williams asked if SFC's role would be to simply support/not support the petition or actually become a co-petitioner. Chair Kuhajda, Warren, and Bart all expressed the opinion that SFC only support/not support the list and not actually sign the petition. Bart and Williams elaborated expressing the opinion that SFC should avoid taking an active role in signing petitions and focus on serving as facilitators to help conserve

southeastern fishes. They further cautioned that otherwise, SFC may undermine its credibility with USFWS. Andy Sheldon noted that there were many other non-fish species on the list and if SFC signed the petition, we would also be endorsing the listing of other groups for which we are not experts. Peggy Shute noted that many SFC members were USFWS employees and signing the petition could be a conflict of interest for the society. Mark Cantrell stated that there were better ways for SFC to interact with USFWS to raise awareness of the conservation status of southeastern fishes. He cited SFC's generation of the 'Desperate Dozen' list as an example. Jim Williams argued that SFC should take on the role of vetting the list and using our expertise to make suggestions to remove species that should not be on the list to prevent USFWS from getting a list with all 88 species included. Several members expressed their agreement with this approach and Chair Kuhajda stated that he would re-activate the Technical Advisory Committee and ask them to examine the list and provide feedback to the membership.

7. Petition to List *Elassoma alabamae*

Members in attendance were presented with information on the status of a proposed development in a five mile stretch of the range of *E. alabamae* in Beaverdam Creek. Members were asked to consider signing a letter to support listing of the species by USFWS. In this stretch there are plans for a housing development that would greatly impact a substantial portion of the range of the species. The species was previously petitioned for listing which caused considerable issues and concerns with landowners in the area. Chair Kuhajda noted that FWS was reluctant to list the species because they were concerned that this would scare

landowners into no longer cooperating with them in conservation efforts or ultimately in landowners selling properties and allowing development to move forward. Mike Sandel expressed his opinion that the species required emergency listing. Brett Albanese asked if 'petitioning' was the same as 'emergency listing'. Paul Hartfield stated that the decision for an emergency listing of a species was not something that could be requested, but that this action was a decision that could only be made by USFWS. One member noted that FWS was in precarious negotiations with one landowner and that if they were petitioned to list the species, they may lose his support and cooperation. Paul Hartfield noted that based on discussions with the landowner, it seemed that he was willing to consider entering his property into a conservation easement, but at the time there was no concrete or tangible agreement in place. Jim Williams expressed his concern that the landowner may be 'buying time' so that he can sell the property to the interested developers in the region before any conservation measure would prevent development and thus his ability to sell the land. Hartfield also noted that an easement alone may not be enough to ensure proper habitat conservation measures are followed. David Etnier stated that in his view this was a simple case: members of SFC realize that *E. alabamae* warrants recognition as a federally endangered species and under the mission of our society, we have a strong commitment to do what we can to see that it is listed as quickly as possible.

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Kuhajda at 6:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Secretary Rebecca Blanton Johansen