

American Fisheries Society Oil Spill Initiative

The B.P. Oil Spill in the Gulf of Mexico is a disaster that is having, and will continue to have, far reaching impacts on the region's fisheries and other aquatic resources. It is imperative that public responses to the oil spill utilize and communicate the best science information available in an understandable and useful manner.

The American Fisheries Society (AFS) is a professional scientific organization with a primary focus on advancing and communicating science in the arenas of fisheries and allied disciplines. Accordingly, AFS will engage in fisheries-related oil spill issues with the professional scientific disciplines that are the foundation of the organization's identity and credibility.

Action Items:

1. Contact plenary speakers for the 2010 AFS Annual Meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, particularly Dr. Jane Lubchenco (NOAA Administrator) with encouragement to incorporate oil spill issues and oil spill examples when addressing the meeting's theme "Merging Our Deeper Currents".
2. Form a special *ad hoc* committee, with members appointed by the AFS President, to provide direction and oversight for all AFS activities and initiatives addressing the oil spill, short- and long-term. This *ad hoc* committee will report directly to the AFS President. It will be authorized to form subcommittees (pending presidential approval) to address its tasks. These tasks will include but not be limited to the following:
 - a. Coordinate with Federal Agencies (particularly NOAA/NMFS, USFWS, USEPA, USMMS and USGS) to assist with technical reviews of proposals, reports and other documents pertaining to the oil spill. The AFS reviews should be conducted by a carefully-selected blue ribbon scientific review panel (members different than those of the *ad hoc* committee). Identification of scientific review panel members will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by the law. Primary responsibilities of this review panel are that of: (1) ensuring that biota, ecology, and fisheries are recognized and included as important components of perspectives, discussions, initiatives, and deliverables; (2) ensuring that the scientific method of analysis is clearly presented and articulated; and (3) ensuring that the best available science is used in formulating conclusions and decisions.
 - b. If requested by federal agencies, assist them with the development of technically sound and equitable means for allocation of funds designated for oil spill-related research and restoration that is focused on fisheries, fish species, and related ecology in the Gulf of Mexico and its associated

coastal and estuarine environments. It is recommended that this task be the responsibility of a subcommittee, with members recommended by the *ad hoc* committee, and appointed by the AFS President.

- c. Investigate the feasibility of assisting federal agencies in identifying data sets relevant to the oil spill impact on regional fisheries and the economies that depend on them.
3. Coordinate with federal and state agencies to ensure that timely information regarding the oil spill is made available via the AFS website.
4. Coordinate with FISHNET to communicate with the U.S. Congress (via letter and testimony) regarding the importance of science in addressing the oil spill (AFS Executive Director will assume primary responsibility)
5. Provide summary documents (as handouts) to AFS members during the 2010 AFS annual meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania that clearly document the status of (1) the oil spill and (2) agency & organization responses in terms of addressing biota, ecology and fisheries impacted by the oil spill. These handouts will serve as briefing materials for item #6 (below).
6. Organize and conduct a special session on the oil spill during the 2010 AFS annual meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. This special session is scheduled for Thursday afternoon, 16 September 2010. The current AFS president (by then past-president) is in charge of this special session. There will be no more than six invited presentations representing federal and state agencies, the fishing industry, and non-governmental organizations. This special session will be considered as a “kick off” for discussions that will utilize the fisheries forum within the AFS open-access electronic journal *Marine and Coastal Fisheries*.