Oregon Chapter American Fisheries Society

Human Dimensions Committee

Jason Dunham, Committee Chair

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2023-24 Work plan

**Mission of Oregon AFS:**

*To improve the conservation and sustainability of Oregon fishery resources and their aquatic ecosystems for long-term public benefit by advancing science, education and public discourse concerning fisheries and aquatic science and by promoting the development of fisheries professionals.*

**Human Dimensions[[2]](#footnote-2) Committee Objective**

The goal of the Human Dimensions Committee is to integrate social science into fisheries management and research. Social science is often considered a discipline that is separate from fisheries management and research, but ultimately both entail an understanding of inextricably linked social-ecological systems (SES). Fisheries management and research occurs within the context of SES and explicitly acknowledging the complex and dynamic feedbacks that occur between human and natural systems can benefit both. In a world increasingly dominated by humans, integration of social science is therefore more important than ever. A greater understanding of underlying social and economic systems can inform fishery management and conservation decisions to promote sustainable public policy. This approach also provides a holistic view that incorporates human behavior, social values, and the relationships people have with natural resources into management and conservation frameworks. Accordingly, integration of social science throughout the entire process from the initial planning of fisheries management and research efforts through implementation and final reporting is often warranted. To advance this goal, the Committee will support the following objectives:

1. **Attract social scientists from outside of the traditional fisheries community and provide a venue for them to participate in all relevant aspects of fisheries management and research.**
	1. Potential action items include:
		1. Increase participation of social scientists in annual ORAFS meetings through oral and poster presentations, special sessions, and workshops. This may initially require special incentives to encourage participation and recruitment (e.g., waive fees for registration).
		2. Routine networking through quarterly meetings of the ORAFS Human Dimensions Committee, as well as direct communication with the ORAFS ExCom and other levels within AFS. Host at least one in-person meeting per year (at the ORAFS Annual Meeting or otherwise).
2. **Increase awareness of social science applications in fisheries management and research.**
	1. Potential action items include:
		1. Collaborate with local, regional, and national AFS to promote awareness and understanding of social science and its critical importance to fisheries, potentially in the near-term through a perspectives article published in Fisheries magazine.
		2. Coordinate activities with related social science initiatives in other scientific societies such as The Wildlife Society, The Society for Conservation Biology, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, as well as other institutions that support such initiatives. This could result in a regional community of practice that is affiliated with these entities and provide more efficient and effective delivery of social science to fisheries.[[3]](#footnote-3)
		3. Assist in development and/or review of agency plans, handbooks, or other materials that promote social science integration.
		4. Produce an accessible review of existing resources for social science related to fisheries management and research (or links to existing efforts that meet this need: e.g., HD.gov).[[4]](#footnote-4)
3. **Integrate social science into fisheries management and research.**
	1. Potential action items include:
		1. Co-develop integrated and innovative social science projects (management or research) that foster interdisciplinary communication and collaboration through focused sub-committee efforts.
		2. Synthesis of applications from fisheries or related disciplines that provide examples and future directions for social science integration.
		3. Use this committee as an ad-hoc forum for sharing these ideas with projects in progress[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Expected Outcomes**

1. Increased awareness of the value of social science as an integral part of fisheries that is equal to other more traditional areas of emphasis.
2. Increased professional career opportunities for social scientists within the fisheries arena.
3. Emergence of new practices that support consistent inclusion of social science investigation in the scope research and management funding opportunities tied to fisheries management and research. Ultimately this could include formal adoption of new policies and procedures that are informed by this committee’s efforts.
4. Improved science and management that is more capable of addressing the grand challenge of understanding SES and fisheries in a rapidly transforming world.
1. Please note this is a very active committee with regular meetings in-between annual ORAFS conferences. The workplan here will accordingly be a dynamic entity. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Note that references to human dimensions and social science encompass a broad range of scientific lines of inquiry (e.g., [Spalding et al. 2017](https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/fee.1476)) and that definitions of what constitutes “human dimensions” or “social science” are difficult to precisely bound or specify. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Note that early efforts to assemble an effort at this level are underway and involve members from this Committee [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Note that funding and planning to implement this specific recommendation is already in place. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Routine meetings and networking have contributed at least partially to new projects that address action item. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)