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HOBO logger that provided rapid expansion of habitat assessment. Photo by D. Merrigan, UAA ACCS.

AKTEMP: Alaska's Stream and Lake Temperature Database

Marcus Geist

Alaska continues to witness the greatest warming of any state in our country, and Alaska's wild salmon, and other native fish are experiencing change across the full range of their habitats. As we know, water temperature plays a critical role in fish growth, reproduction, and survivorship. Healthy salmon and resident fish support vital sport, commercial, subsistence, and personal use fisheries across Alaska, so there is a pressing need to assess water temperatures in Alaska's freshwater habitats. The advent of small, reliable, and relatively inexpensive HOBO loggers from the Onset company led to a proliferation of continuous stream and lake temperature data collection by organizations across the state. Yet there wasn't a central repository to store and distribute these data.

Attendees of a *2012 workshop* sponsored by the Western Alaska Partnership (formerly the Western Alaska Landscape Conservation Cooperative), the Northwest Boreal Partnership (originally the Northwest Boreal Landscape Conservation Cooperative), and the Alaska Climate Science Center (U.S. Geological Survey) attempted to assemble water temperature data on a static map depicting sites of varying data quality and differing information. Some agencies were collecting continuous temperature data at intervals of 60 minutes or less while others

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Recruiting for Chapter Historian

After nearly 23 years AFS Alaska Chapter Historian, Randy Brown has ceded the reins for a new historian. If that new historian might be you, please contact Chapter President Whitney Crittenden (*president@afs-alaska.org*) for more information.

The President's Corner



Whitney Crittenden, AFS Alaska Chapter President

Hello Alaska Chapter,

While many of you open this newsletter to learn about fish, this corner is going to take a slight deviation and focus on the confluence of fish, finances, and the funding that keeps our student programs thriving. Thanks to the generous support of our members, the Alaska Chapter provides annual scholarships and travel assistance to students who represent the future of the Chapter and fisheries science.

Our current endowment funds support the Molly Ahlgren Scholarship and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Travel Award. The Molly Ahlgren Scholarship, established in 2006, honors the life and work of Molly Ahlgren. To date, the Chapter has awarded $94,000 to 28 undergraduate students in her name to help them pursue their academic goals. The DEI Travel Award was established in 1999, and 33 individuals have received travel funding to attend the annual meeting. This fund continues to expand opportunities for those from historically underrepresented groups to participate in Chapter activities and professional development.

Two new endowment funds will soon come online for the Alaska Chapter: the Meacham Family AFS Student Travel Fund (STF) and the Student Presentation Award Fund (SPAF).

The STF was created in 2023 with an initial $30,000 contribution from Charles H. Meacham and Charles P. Meacham to provide travel support for both undergraduate and graduate students. The fund was recently fully funded following an additional $45,000 contribution from the Meacham family, along with several individual donations that helped push the total to the final $125,000 goal.

The SPAF is designed to fund student presentation awards at the Alaska Chapter Annual Meeting. This fund reflects the Chapter's commitment to investing in the next generation of fisheries professionals by increasing student participation, improving accessibility, and elevating the quality of our conference. The SPAF was seeded with $140,000 in 2024, followed by an additional $140,000 in 2025. With the fund now fully endowed, the Chapter will begin distributing awards gained from the SPAF's interest earnings at the 2027 Annual Meeting.

These endowments play a vital role in keeping students engaged in the Chapter and recognizing the dedication they bring to their education and research. They also help ensure that students have opportunities to connect with fisheries professionals from across Alaska and beyond.

None of this would be possible without the work of the Financial Assets Oversight Committee (FAOC). Chaired by Ray Hander, working closely with Treasurer Trent Dodson, and members Milo Adkison, Lee Ann Gardner, Tim Joyce, and Trey Simmons, the FAOC oversees the establishment and management of these endowments to ensure they reach their full potential. When I joined the Executive Committee a few years ago, I never imagined that my AFS journey would include learning about investment strategies and intricacies surrounding establishing endowment funds, especially of this magnitude. What I've learned along the way is that a shared love of fish brings people together, and that fisheries professionals bring an impressive range of skills, passions, and selfless generosity to the table.

As the SPAF and STF become active next year, the Executive Committee will be seeking Chairs for both endowment funds, as well as committee members, to assist with annual selection and distribution. If you are interested in contributing your time or expertise, please reach out to *president@afs-alaska.org*.

Whitney

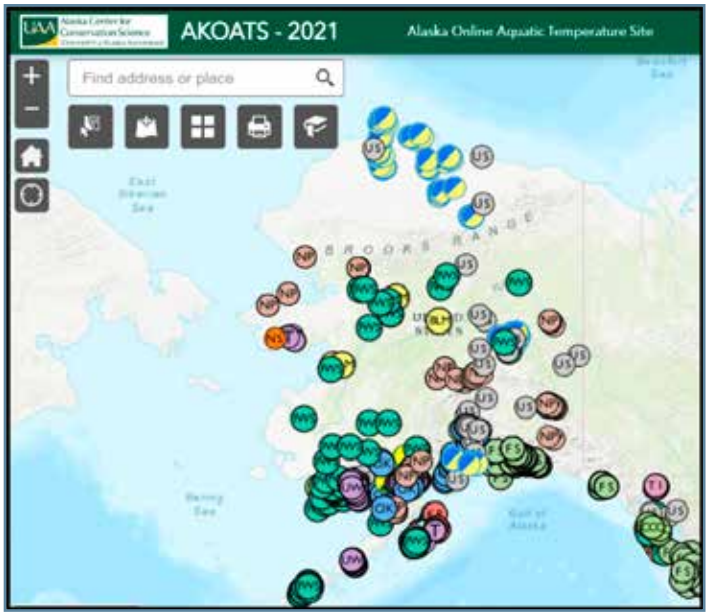
AKTEMP: Alaska's Stream and Lake Temperature Database, continued

were collecting discrete data at monthly or hourly intervals. The workshop identified a need for a more comprehensive metadata inventory with common attributes. Other recommendations included developing state-specific guidance regarding minimum data collection standards and defining the architecture to eventually store and distribute freshwater temperature data for Alaska.



Retrieving temperature data from the field. Photo from E. Larson, UAA ACCS.

Researchers at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) began working on a digital collection of freshwater temperature monitoring locations in 2013, supported by a grant from the Western Alaska Landscape Conservation Cooperative. A steering committee of hydrologists and aquatic scientists from across Alaska helped guide the development of required and desired attribute fields. By early 2014, UAA had created *AKOATS*, the Alaska Online Aquatic Temperature Site, a web map site built on ESRI's ArcGIS Online platform. As a geospatial metadata inventory, AKOATS mapped WHO was monitoring (organization name), WHERE they were monitoring (lat./long.), and WHEN they had monitored (operational dates), but it didn't yet capture WHAT: the actual temperature data.



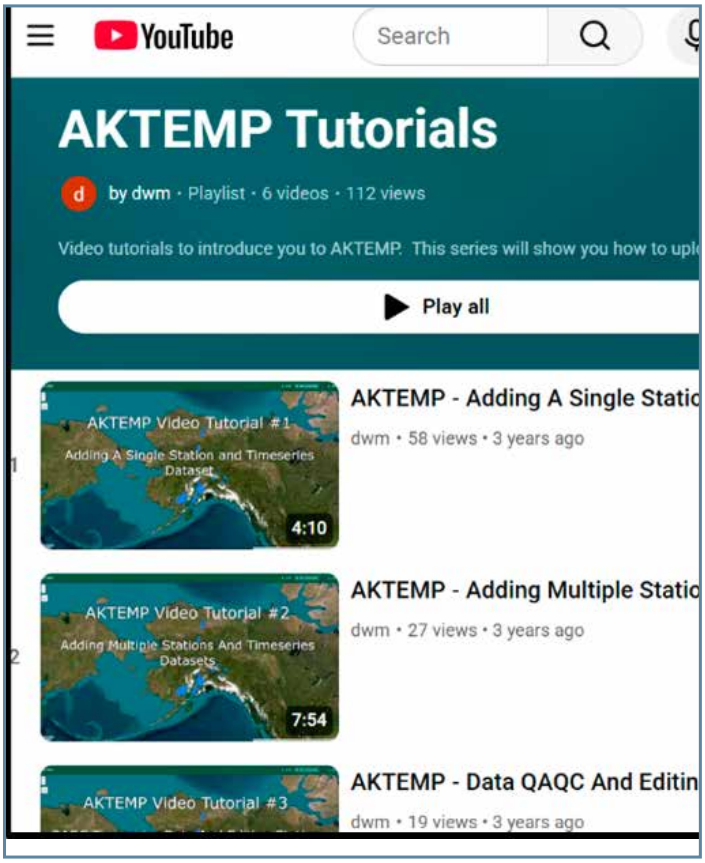
Screenshot from AKOATS, an early metadata web map . Photo from M. Geist, UAA ACCS.

In 2014, the Alaska Center for Conservation Science (ACCS) partnering with Cook Inletkeeper, a leader in Alaska stream temperature monitoring, published "Stream Temperature Data Collection Standards and Protocol for Alaska: Minimum Standards to Generate Data Useful for Regional-scale Analyses" (*Mauger et al. 2014*). This is a basic rulebook creating consistency and enabling widespread data collection participation.

With the guidance on standards and protocols, coupled with the AKOATS web map showing which organizations were monitoring in common watersheds, informal regional temperature networks began to coalesce. Individual scientists previously separated by different organizations were now united by shared geographies of interest, a basic set of data rules, and a common goal to better understand Alaska's freshwater fish habitats. A *Southcentral Alaska stream temperature network* grew from Cook Inletkeeper Science Director Sue Mauger's foundational efforts, establishing sites throughout the region. Following that same model, the Southwest Alaska Salmon Habitat Partnership

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AKTEMP: Alaska's Stream and Lake Temperature Database, continued



YouTube video Tutorials for AKTEMP. Image from M. Geist, UAA ACCS.

created a Bristol Bay *water temperature monitoring network* knitting together people and information across the watershed. Similar efforts have since evolved in Southeast Alaska and the Cooper River watershed.

In February 2023, ACCS released a freshwater temperature database for Alaska. The *AKTEMP* website is a cloud-based database platform for storing and accessing stream and lake temperature monitoring data. The database was created by Jeff Walker of Walker Environmental Research and Ben Lechter of the U.S. Geological Survey's Eastern Ecological Science Center in partnership with ACCS, with funding through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with subsequent support from the Alaska Climate Adaptation Science Center. Jeff and Ben had previously built a similar freshwater temperature database spanning twelve states across New England and Mid-Atlantic regions. To meet Alaska's needs, AKTEMP included adaptions and improvements.

To further improve access and accessibility, ACCS developed a series of *YouTube tutorial* videos providing guidance for data collectors to easily upload data, and instructions for data consumers wanting to use this information in their research. The videos also demonstrate how collectors can QA/QC their data in AKTEMP or upload data that has already been reviewed.

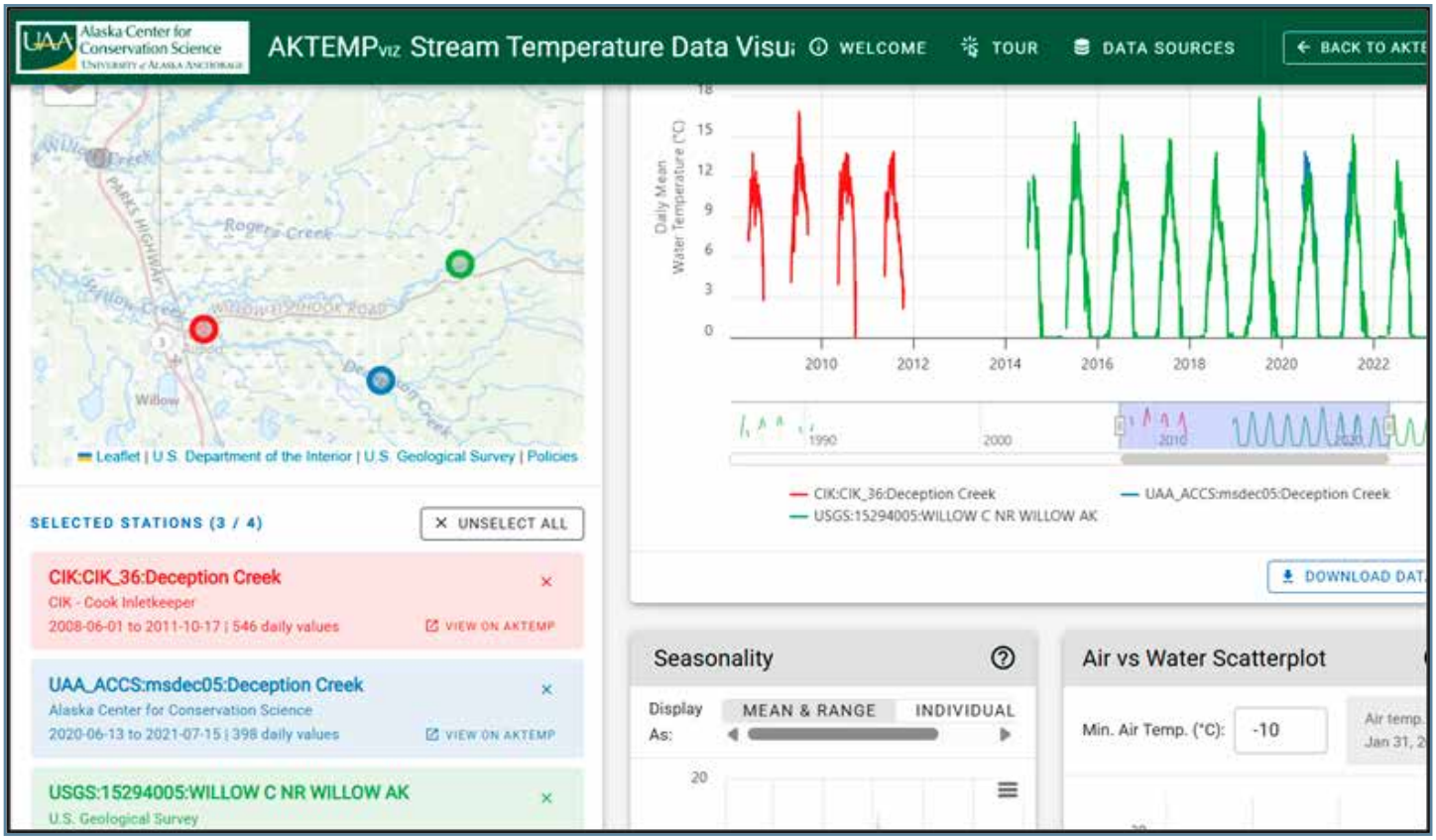
In 2024, ACCS organized the Alaska Stream and Lake Temperature Action Plan Workshop on the UAA campus. Participants from across the state and from a wide range of organizations (federal, state, tribal, non-profit, and academia) gathered to provide AKTEMP user feedback, generate ideas for future tools, and to begin discussions on creating an updated Action Plan. A team identified at the workshop eventually published the revised Plan in

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Participants at the 2024 Alaska Stream and Lake Temperature Action Plan Workshop. Photo from M. Geist, UAA ACCS.

AKTEMP: Alaska's Stream and Lake Temperature Database, continued



Screenshot from AKTEMPviz application. *Image from M. Geist, UAA ACCS.*

early 2025 "Freshwater Temperature Action Plan: Next steps to protect Alaska's fish and wild salmon habitat from the impacts of thermal change" (*Mauger et al. 2025*).

As of the start of 2026, the AKTEMP project currently stores and serves stream and lake temperature data from over 880 sites. The program provides a repository for over 30 federal, state, regional non-profit, and tribal organizations which have access to their local waters, but previously lacked the data infrastructure or public facing services of AKTEMP. As of February 2026, AKTEMP stores over 71 million individual water temperature records. The system is configured to continue growing with new sites and new data contributors.

In addition to its previous capabilities to view individual station data and view multiple depths at a single station, AKTEMP now includes an *AKTEMPViz* application allowing users to compare up to four stations on a single graph, and to see water temperature in relation to air temperatures. Via application programming interface (APIs) connections, which enable different computer systems to communicate, AKTEMPviz includes an additional 129 USGS gaging stations' stream temperature data and 35 National Park Service sites.

If you have collected continuous stream or lake temperature data in Alaska, please consider sharing that information via the AKTEMP platform. Alaska's vast size and challenging logistics along with our shared loved of its aquatic wonders should compel us to cooperate. You worked hard to travel to each site and deploy and retrieve those temperature loggers! Don't let that data languish on a laptop or stagnate on an internal server. Questions, concerns, and suggestions can be directed to our AKTEMP team at *uaa_aktemp@alaska.edu*.

Marcus Geist is a Research Geographer for the UAA ACCS. Having earned a B.A. from Davidson College and an M.E.M. from Duke University, Marcus has worked across a wide range of environmental and natural resource sectors, including Alaskan projects using GIS for large site suitability analyses, implementing NEPA, conservation planning, and providing field support for fish surveys. He is passionate about sharing geospatial data publicly to inform decisions.

Stan Moberly Passes

Stan Moberly passed away peacefully in Tucson, Arizona, on December 6, 2025, with family surrounding—he will be dearly missed. Stan lived with his wife of 35 years, Linda Perine, in Tenakee Springs, Alaska; they spent the winters traveling in their Fifth-wheel trailer and visiting friends up and down the West Coast, staying ahead of any cold weather. He enjoyed riding eBikes with his "biker gang" (their motto: "Born to Be Mild"), reminiscing about and sharing stories of fishing, meeting new people, and socializing in general.



Photo from Mike Moberly.

Stan worked as director of marketing and assistant to the President for/with his good friend, Keith Jefferts, at Northwest Marine Technology (NMT). There, he/NMT helped researchers, businesses and government Agencies worldwide solve their various problems with marking and studying aquatic species for research and management. That was a natural progression from Stan's work for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, where he retired as the Director of the Fisheries Rehabilitation and Enhancement Division (FRED).

Stan was always deeply engaged with other professionals in fisheries issues. He joined the American Fisheries Society (AFS) in 1964—he served as President of both the Alaska Chapter (1979-1980) and the Western Division (1983-1984), and also as President of AFS (1987-1988). He was a persistent and tireless advocate of protecting fisheries habitat, and worked both on and with numerous committees and commissions—nationally and internationally—including on the Board of the National Wildlife Federation.

Stan's 20+ years of effort, leadership, and vision helped to establish the National Fish Habitat Partnership, an amalgamation of 20 regional groups into a fish habitat partnership, overlapping all 50 states, working diligently to enhance, conserve, and restore fish habitats. He was also a founder of F.I.S.H. (Fishermen Involved in Saving Habitat). Stan received many recognitions and awards and appointments along the way. In 1992, he received AFS's Carl. R. Sullivan Award, recognizing his leadership in focusing public attention on the need to protect and enhance aquatic resources. The penultimate award was receiving the inaugural "Stanley A. Moberly Award for Outstanding Contributions in Fish Habitat Conservation" in 2019. The award is presented annually to an individual who has achieved significant success in fish habitat advances through research, policy, management, education, project implementation, vision, communications, and/or outreach.

Not bad for a Kansas Boy, born in Elkhart and raised in Oberlin. Stan graduated with a B.S. in Fisheries Biology from Kansas State University. He started his career with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. In 1970, Stan moved with his then-wife, Janet Moberly, and their young son, Michael (Anchorage, Alaska, with his wife, Rebecca Hozubin, and daughter, Charleigh), to Alaska in 1970 to work in "The Last Frontier." Another son, Matthew (Kalamazoo, Michigan, with his wife, Debra St. Aubin), was born to them in Juneau in 1976. After 'early retirement' from the State of Alaska in 1988, Stan moved to Seattle, Washington, to work for NMT. That is where he met Linda - they married on February 13, 1991, three years to the day after they'd met.

Stan's work and advocacy took he and Linda around the world and introduced them to innumerable other professionals, many of whom became colleagues and good friends. These friendships—spanning from the United States, to Australia, Asia, and Europe - endure to this day. While he will be dearly missed by his family, friends, and those fortunate enough to have met him, he should be remembered by the happy memories and fishing trips and tales he shared with them.

AFS Alaska Chapter Annual Meeting Update

Plans continue for the 52nd annual meeting of the AFS Alaska Chapter on March 23-27, 2026, in Fairbanks, AK, with a meeting theme of Strength in Numbers: Building Trust, Resilience, and Collaboration in Alaska's Fisheries. Information on registration, sessions the agenda, lodging options, and other meeting components is available at the Chapter meeting website at *https://newunits.fisheries.org/ak-mtg*. Monday, March 23, will feature two workshops: Decoding Genomics for Fisheries & Aquaculture – A Primer on Bioinformatics will be offered in the morning and Machine Learning in the afternoon. The cost for workshop participation is free for meeting participants and $40 for non-registrants, with some virtual participation available. Evenings will be peppered with events including a Welcome Social at the Morris Thompson Visitor's Center, a Film Festival and Poster Session at the U. of A. Museum of the North on Tuesday, a spawning Run on Wednesday followed by a Trivia Night at the UAF Pub, and the Closing Banquet and Live Auction on Thursday. Some events scheduled by the Chapter's Alaska Chapter AFS Recruitment and Engagement Committee (AK-AFS RAEC), often in collaboration with other groups, include: a Wild and Community Foods Potluck; Affinity Groups; a Women in Fisheries Luncheon; and a Fisheries and Marine Science Mentorship Mixer Luncheon. Finally, several field trips are being finalized including ice fishing, dog mushing, and a trip to Chena Hot Springs – check the website for updates. For additional meeting details, go to the Chapter meeting web site at *https://newunits.fisheries.org/ak-mtg*, or direct questions to program chair Andy Seitz (*presidentelect@afs-alaska.org*).

AFS Alaska Chapter Awards Nominations

The AFS Alaska Chapter is seeking nominations for the following awards: Meritorious Service Award, Alaska Chapter Service Award, and Wally Noerenberg Award for Fishery Excellence.

Alaska Chapter Service Award - Recognizes outstanding service to the Alaska Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. Nominees should demonstrate meaningful contributions through committee service, advancing Chapter objectives, promoting fisheries professionals, supporting student development, enhancing public awareness, and recruiting members.

Meritorious Service Award – Honors an outstanding recent contribution to Alaska fisheries in areas such as research, management, education, planning, industry, or policy development. Nominees do not need to be AFS members. This award recognizes a specific recent accomplishment rather than career-long contributions (which are more appropriately recognized by the Wally Noerenberg Award).

Wally Noerenberg Award for Fishery Excellence - The Alaska Chapter's highest honor, established in 1981, recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to Alaska fisheries. Contributions may include scientific research, technological development, species and habitat management, harvesting or processing innovations, fisheries education, or leadership in national and international fisheries affairs affecting Alaska.

We encourage all members to consider nominating deserving individuals. The nomination form can be found on the *Chapter website*. Then nominations are due by March 6. Award recipients will be announced at the Annual Meeting. Please submit nominations and letters of support, or questions, to the Chapter President at *president@afs-alaska.org*.

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning Monitoring

Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning (PSP) is a recognized concern for harvesters of bivalves, particularly clams, mussels, and scallops. This poisoning results from consumption of bivalves contaminated with paralytic shellfish toxins (PST) produced by the microscopic marine dinoflagellate *Alexandrium*, which bioaccumulates in shellfish and other marine organisms, posing a serious public health risk to people that rely on marine resources. While the documented occurrences have been relatively low, the impacts are substantial with five deaths and over 100 cases of PSP in Alaska since 1993. In an effort to monitor PSP levels, the Knik Tribe's *Paralytic Shellfish Poisoning Risk Management project*, working closely with the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation's Environmental Health Laboratory, tests shellfish, fish, and invertebrate samples from across Alaska.

Recruitment and Engagement (RAE) Committee

Katie Russell and Teresa Fish

Showing up For Our Future

The American Fisheries Society has long positioned itself as a home for rigorous science, professional excellence, and stewardship of aquatic resources. In Alaska, our work sits at the intersection of some of the most rapidly changing ecosystems, with fisheries that support global markets, local economies, and communities whose cultural and economic connections to fish and the ecosystems supporting them stretch back millennia. From this unique environment, the Alaska Chapter of AFS plays a critical role in linking research, management, and communities across vast distances and complex systems.

But the quality and impact of that work depend on who is involved. Fisheries science is shaped by who is hired, who is heard, and who advances. When access to opportunity is uneven, when contributions are overlooked, or when people feel pressure to remain silent to belong, the consequences are real. They appear in the questions we ask, the data we prioritize, and the solutions we pursue. Limiting the range of experiences and perspectives drastically narrows the knowledge that informs the Society's mission.

Many colleagues, particularly those from historically excluded backgrounds, are feeling unseen and unsupported in this moment. They navigate environments where commitment to fairness and equity feels uncertain, even as expectations for resilience and productivity remain high. It is neither reasonable nor ethical to ask those most affected by inequity to carry the burden of fixing it. That responsibility belongs to those with influence.

This moment places a particular responsibility on members with institutional security and authority. Use your voice when others cannot safely do so. If you are a senior scientist, committee chair, Chapter leader, long-standing member, mentor, or industry hiring manager, your influence matters. Advocate for transparent recruitment, equitable hiring, and inclusive spaces. Sponsor and mentor members who are not already well-connected. Question familiar systems that advantage a few while excluding others. Speak up when dismissive or exclusionary behavior goes unchallenged. Ask, consistently and publicly, not only whose voices are missing, but why.

Silence from positions of power does not preserve neutrality; it signals permission. In moments like this, choosing not to engage only strengthens the barriers that undermine our science and our mission.

How we exercise authority matters as much as the authority itself. Showing up now means aligning practice with principle, and using credibility, security, and seniority to create and maintain space for others. If our goal is to steward fisheries for the long term, we must also steward the people and institutions entrusted with that work. The future of our science and our Society depnds on it. Not someday. Now.

The Science of Beaver Expansion

Beavers may be new to the Arctic, but they're already leaving their mark. Due to environmental change, the industrious rodents are pushing north into permafrost and tundra landscapes. Beaver arrival means consequences for subsistence users. Creeks that once supported reliable fishing are now altered or blocked. Cross-country routes used by people are now submerged in beaver-engineered wetlands.

Supported by an Alaska Sea Grant Community Partnership Development Grant, University of Alaska Fairbanks researcher Will Samuel and fellow UAF scientist Ken Tape engaged in a project to identify actionable research into Arctic beaver expansion. Their work was part of the Arctic Beaver Observation Network (A-BON), an international group of scientists, Indigenous leaders, and land and wildlife managers working to better understand and respond. Rather than beginning with predefined research questions, Samuel and Tape's efforts centered on listening, relationship-building, and co-developing priorities based on local observations.

Relationships between beavers and fish can vary widely across regions, habitats, and species, supporting the importance of place-based research. Carefully documenting where, when, and how beaver activity affects fish is critical for

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The Science of Beaver Expansion, continued

informing which impacts are harmful, which may be neutral or beneficial, and how those outcomes differ across the Arctic.

To better understand local impacts, the research team visited Noatak in 2024 and Noatak, Selawik, and Kotzebue in 2025, meeting with tribal councils, village representatives, and state and federal staffs. Community members shared observations, identified areas of concern, and directed researchers to sites where beaver dams have impacted fish habitat. Concerns were consistent across communities with residents worried about beaver dams fragmenting habitat or preventing fish from reaching spawning grounds, increased sedimentation in spawning areas, and changes to water temperature or quality.

While beaver dams in more southern regions may be beneficial to fish and wildlife, permafrost, ice dynamics, extreme seasonality, and low-gradient rivers mean that impacts in the Arctic may differ. A central goal of this pilot project was to determine what research is most needed and how future studies can produce actionable science for residents, with follow-up studies to document beaver effects on fish and other components of Arctic ecosystems.



Will Samuel sampling to determine fish presence near a beaver dam. Photo by Taylor Cubbage, UAF.

Electrofishing Training

Interest is requested for a 2026 backpack electrofishing training workshop, to include fish identification and the Anadromous Waters Cataloging (AWC). Organizers would like to hear from interested people regarding a course in either Juneau or Fairbanks. If you are interested, but from somewhere else, we still want to hear from you. Anybody with a future in electrofishing (or catching small fish and nominating them to the AWC) is also encouraged to attend.

This course will be conducted through a partnership between the AFS Alaska Chapter and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. This is primarily offered for those who will be electrofishing and need training to meet permitting requirements or want to hone their skills. Based on past participant feedback, I am also going to dive into fish identification (especially the juvenile salmonids!) as well as an orientation to Anadromous Waters Catalog nominations, from data collection to submission. I envision a 2.5-day course, but a full schedule of events and any fees will be announced as courses develop.

Given travel time and the past electrofishing class schedules that worked, as well as timeframes that should coincide with decent weather, safe electrofishing conditions, and many people's field work schedules in southeast and the interior, I am considering the 2026 dates.

Juneau: 5/27-5/29 (Wednesday-Friday)

Fairbanks: 6/9-6/11 (Tuesday-Thursday)

If you are interested, please email nate.cathcart@alaska.gov with the preferred location and who is interested (you, a lab team, crew, or piscine posse). If you would like to attend a portion of the course, such as electrofishing only, fish ID, or AWC only, please let me know.

Fish of the Week!



Join us every Monday for our Fish of the Week podcast! We get to know all the fish — how they live in Alaska, what habitats they use, what they eat, and where they go and why. Everything you need to know to appreciate and conserve these fish and be a successful angler.

We've got lots of fish stories.

Student Subunit Happenings

Lauren Yancy, Student Subunit Representatives

In December 2025, the Alaska Student Subunit hosted its final meeting of the semester. We were joined remotely by UAF Alumni and current ADF&G biologists Taylor Cubbage, Parker Bradley, Alex Reich, and Jared Weems. They shared their journeys through graduate school at UAF, how they ended up as state biologists, and gave valuable advice to current students. We appreciate them giving back to the Subunit by sharing their time and wisdom.

Now, we are over the halfway mark for the current academic year! As 2026 comes blazing by, the Subunit is busy planning and preparing for all things AK AFS. Prior to the annual meeting, the AFS Student Symposium occured on February 27 in Fairbanks, Juneau, and remotely giving students a chance to present a practice talk before the real deal at Alaska Chapter. We encouraged attendees of the Student Symposium to participate in the feedback process for student presenters. There were generous student presentation awards this year for best presenters, both for oral talks and posters! The weekend before the annual meeting the Student Subunit will host a student retreat, giving students all across Alaska a chance to congregate in person and prepare for the meeting.



AFS Alaska Chapter Student Representative Lauren Yancy.

During AK AFS, the Student Subunit is pairing up with the AK AFS RAE Committee to host this year's mentorship mixer which will take place on Tuesday as a luncheon. For more information, email student@afs-alaska.org.

Cordova Students Participate in Environmental Data Collection

For the 2025-2026 school year, Prince William Sound Science Center CORal Network educators Lauren Bien and Cristina Reo are partnering with science teachers from the Cordova Jr/Sr High School to conduct monthly environmental sampling at Odiak Pond and the local harbor. Students are collecting data from two sites at Odiak Pond, one with running water and one with still water, and two sites at the community T-Dock, one at the surface and one at depth. Data include metrics such as dissolved oxygen, dissolved carbon dioxide, temperature, and pH. Data collection began in fall 2025 and is scheduled to continue through spring 2026.

As part of the Community Organized Restoration and Learning (CORaL) Network, the Community Pathways to Student Science (COMPASS) was established to support STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education by building a regional network of partnerships that gather data on the Gulf of Alaska ecosystem. By connecting communities, researchers, teachers, and students, COMPASS fosters a deeper understanding of the scientific process and local environmental issues, all while contributing to critical research.



A Cordova student collects water samples at Odiak Pond. Photo by Christina Reo, PWSSC.

Environmental Concerns Corner

Sue Mauger and Joel Markis

"The only constant in life is change" (Heraclitus). True, but it's the rate of change that often overwhelms us as professionals and citizens. This certainly rings true when we consider the rapid change in our climate system; particularly, in Alaska, as we continue to warm faster than other regions of the world. Our research and management of Alaska's fisheries has had to adapt quickly to understand new climate signals and resulting biological responses. Currently, it's the rapid rate of regulatory change that is quite staggering.

Most recently (2/12/26), the Endangerment Finding: the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) repealed the scientific determination that gives the government the authority to combat climate change. The 2009 Endangerment Finding has been the legal basis for federal rules limiting greenhouse gas pollution. Although this most directly relates to the Clean Air Act, this repeal means high emissions scenarios (worst-case scenarios) in our climate modeling will be our most accurate guide for understanding the future trajectory of our fisheries habitats.

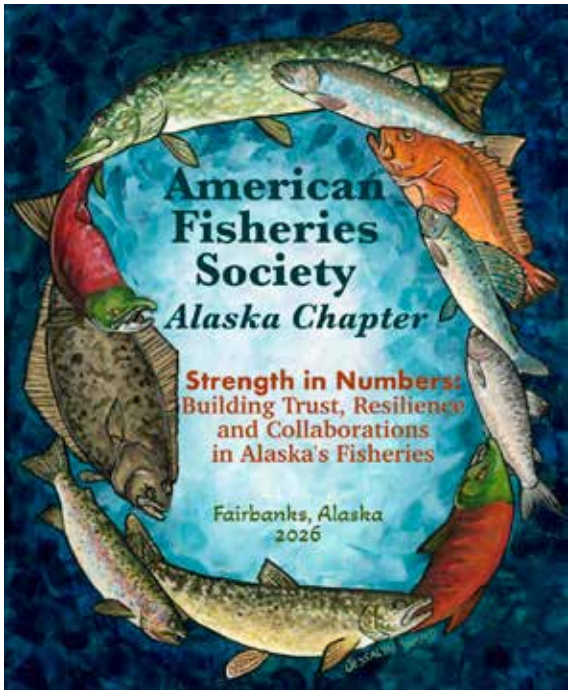
Also, with only short comment periods for the public and experts to weigh in, we've seen highly consequential changes involving complex legal questions and technical matters with profound implications for our fisheries resources. For example, with only a 45-day comment period over the Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year holidays for the ongoing Waters of the United States (WOTUS) redefinition in the Clean Water Act (CWA), the AFS parent society scrambled to submit comments to support federal protections for our waters. An excerpt from the society's comment letter:

As a result of the 2023 U.S. Supreme Court decision in Sackett v. EPA, approximately two-thirds of the nation's remaining wetlands and up to 5 million miles of streams are no longer protected by the CWA…Under the most restrictive interpretation of WOTUS in the Proposed Rule, the vast majority of wetlands previously covered by the CWA would not be subject to federal permitting for dredging or filling. In addition, as acknowledged by the agencies, it would result in "reducing the number of 404 permits issued and acres of wetland impacts mitigated." Projections show that 84% of wetlands that previously required a federal permit to dredge or fill would no longer be covered under the CWA.

To more fully understand the implications of the WOTUS redefinition, read the full comment letter.

Now, EPA is proposing to revise the existing CWA Section 401 water quality certification regulations: https://www.epa.gov/cwa-401/cwa-section-401-regulatory-requirements. The proposal would limit states and Tribes to prevent federally permitted projects - like interstate pipelines, dams, power plants, mines, and data centers - from impacting our rivers, wetlands, and drinking water sources. The EPA accepted public comments on the proposed rule until February 17, a 30 -day comment period. There's been a lot of pressure to extend this deadline so you may still have time if you want to comment. Comments should be identified by Docket ID No. EPA-HQ-OW-2025-2929.

With short public comment periods, our ability to weigh in at the AFS Alaska Chapter level is more difficult. Your individual comments as fisheries professionals will be that much more important. We will send more regular emails to the general listserv to get you current information on environmental concerns related to fisheries and our waters. Quarterly communications through this newsletter just won't cut it in this time of rapid regulatory change.



Meetings and Events

American Fisheries Society Alaska Chapter Annual Meeting

March 23–27, 2026. The 52nd annual meeting of the AFS Alaska Chapter will be in Fairbanks, AK. More information will be posted at https://afs-alaska.org/.

Western Alaska Interdisciplinary Science Conference

April 7–9, 2026. This meeting will be held in Bethel, AK. For more information go to https://alaskaseagrant.org/events/2026-western-alaska-interdisciplinary-science-conference.

American Fisheries Society Western Division Annual Meeting

May 4–7, 2026. The next AFS Western Division meeting will be in Portland, OR. More information will be posted at https://wdafs.org/meetings/annual-meeting/.

Lowell Wakefisld Fisheries Symposium

May 5–8, 2026. This 34th meeting will be in Kodiak, AK. More information will be posted at https://alaskaseagrant.org/events/wakefield-fisheries-symposium-2026/.

American Fisheries Society Parent Society Annual Meeting

August 30–September 3, 2026. The 156th annual meeting will be held in Columbus, OH. For more information go to https://afsannualmeeting.fisheries.org/.

Recruiting for Chapter Historian

If the Alaska Chapter's new historian might be you, please contact Chapter President Whitney Crittenden (president@afs-alaska.org) for more information.

AFS Code of Conduct

The Ethics and Professional Conduct Committee (EPCC) of the American Fisheries Society has developed a code of conduct for our meetings and AFS-sponsored functions, whether virtual or in person. This brief document is available at https://fisheries.org/about/governance/afs-meetings-code-of-conduct/. Please read through this document to ensure that we are collectively working to build awareness of this policy to ensure that all AFS-related gatherings are a respectful and inclusive experience for everyone.

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ONCORHYNCHUS

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Editor
Bill Bechtol
Bechtol Research
P.O. Box 3426, Homer 99603-3426
Phone 299-6146
bechtolresearch@hughes.net

Production
Connie Taylor
Fathom Publishing
P.O. Box 200448, Anchorage 99520-0448
Phone/Fax 272-3305
Connie@FathomPublishing.com

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2025-26 Alaska Chapter Officers

President Whitney Crittenden
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
president@afs-alaska.org

President-Elect Andy Seitz
University of Alaska Fairbanks
presidentelect@afs-alaska.org

Vice President Erin Larson
Alaska Center for Conservation Science
vicepresident@afs-alaska.org

Immediate Past-President Audra Brase
Alaska Department of Fish and Gamet
pastpresident@afs-alaska.org

Treasurer Trent Dodson
Kodiak Regional Aquac. Assoc., Ph: 486-6555;
treasurer@afs-alaska.org

Secretary Andrea James
Chickaloon Village Traditional Council
secretary@afs-alaska.org

Student Subunit Representative Lauren Yancy
University of Alaska Fairbanks
student@afs-alaska.org

Feel free to contact the Executive Committee members.