



# Gill Raker Gazette

Newsletter of the Idaho Chapter of the American Fisheries Society

Volume 45, Issue 2

June 2026

Editor: Mike Peterson

## President's Message Chapter history, finances and relevancy

Greetings to Idaho chapter members and those new to Idaho fisheries. As I embark on the last 2 years of my presidential tenure I'd like to identify my priorities over that time. But first, I want to thank all those who attended our annual meeting at Idaho Falls and especially those who helped make the meeting a success, both advancing our mission and contributing financially (meeting and financial summaries to follow). I was pleasantly rejuvenated (and relieved) to pull off the event amid what will likely be the last meeting at the "Shilo" as we know it. As of April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026, Shilo's parent company was undergoing bankruptcy. Good riddance and goodbye Shilo!

Along with planning and executing chapter meetings and running the business of the chapter, I'd like to devote time updating our chapter history document, explore ways to use chapter finances to keep meeting registration costs down, and ensure we are remaining relevant to our members and the fisheries community. If you have not read the chapter's history document produced by Josh Bernard in 2007, I encourage you all to do so [ICAFS History](#). You will find many historic facts that will please you. For me, the stories of how the chapter helped pass Idaho's Stream Protection Act in the 70's, how the chapter helped create Senate Bill 1419 that named the cutthroat as the Idaho State fish, and how the chapter helped advocate for stronger and better relationships between fisheries biologist and fish culturalist, are few of my favorites. The document ends in 2007 and recognized the creation of our second student subunit at ISU and allowing members to e-vote. We have certainly grown and evolved since then and from the words of former Chapter President Jim Capurso (2006-2007), documenting our history "...would do well to foster a sense of heritage among chapter members while recording the achievements of the chapter." If you are interested in helping serve on our history update sub-committee, please reach out.

Due to constant increases in meeting costs, I plan to work with the Western Division AFS Financial Sustainability Committee and our EXCOM to explore ways our chapter can be more strategic in using funds to help offset meeting registration. And finally, I want to provide additional platforms to make sure chapter members have opportunities to feel connected outside our annual meetings and identify additional ways to remain relevant to chapter members, so stay tuned! Wishing you all a safe and productive summer and please do your best to help document fisheries impacts due to low summer flow.



As we all take time to get on Idaho's great waters, ICAFS President Tom Bassista, reminds folks to stay safe and wear a life jacket! Happy fishing and boating!

**Tom Bassista , ICAFS President;** [tom.bassista@idfg.idaho.gov](mailto:tom.bassista@idfg.idaho.gov)

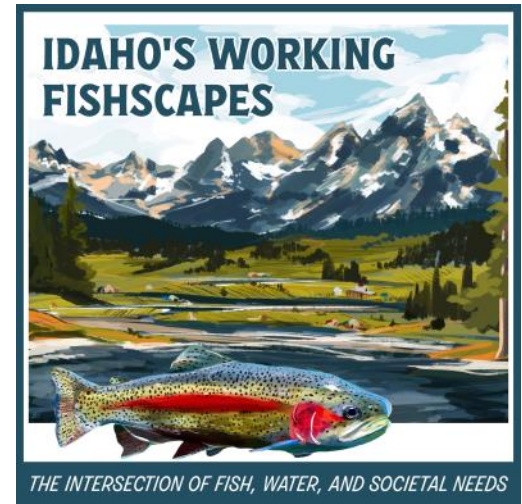


## Idaho AFS 2026 Annual Meeting Summary

### Idaho's Working Fishscapes: The Intersection of Fish, Water, and Societal Needs

#### Communicated by Rebekah L. Horn

The 64th annual Idaho Chapter AFS (ICAFS) meeting was held March 3-6<sup>th</sup>, 2026 at the Snake River Event Center and Shilo Inn in Idaho Falls, ID. There was a total of 218 people in attendance, including 54 students from five universities and 2 colleges (College of Southern Idaho and College of Western Idaho). As in previous years, the Idaho Chapter was proud to offer free registration to all students in attendance, which was made possible by our amazing 19 sponsors! The Chapter also continued to assist professional members whose organization could not provide full support by offering a financial assistance category which discounted registration by over 60%. This category allowed nine additional professionals to attend the meeting who would not have otherwise had the opportunity.



To help promote the development of fisheries professionals the meeting started with four well-attended workshops covering a variety of topics that were organized by the Continuing Education Committee with help from the Aquatic Habitat, Aquaculture, and Recruitment and Retention committees. The workshops included a Remote Sensing Techniques and Applications, Aquaculture for Biologists, Tools for Career Success in a Changing Hiring Landscape, and a very popular hands-on Boat Maintenance 101 workshop, that was held off-site at a regional Idaho Fish and Game office. There were 72 unique workshop attendees and 25 qualified professionals that assisted in teaching the workshops.

The plenary session, organized by ICAFS President-Elect Tom Bassista, focused on water resources and balancing water use for native fish and a thriving aquaculture and agricultural industry, a timely topic for Idaho and much of the Western-US. There were eight speakers that represented the majority of water interests across the state, including Mat Weaver (Director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources), Paul Arrington (Executive Director and General Counsel for the Idaho Waters Users Association), Dr. Kendra Kaiser (Director of the Idaho Water Resources Research Institute), Dr. Jesse Trushenski (Chief Science Officer for Riverence), Karen Henderson (Chief Legal Officer for the Riverence Group), Bobby Hills (Water Exchange Project Leader for the Nez Perce Tribe), Allison Lebeda (Water Rights Program Coordinator for the Nez Perce Tribe's Water Resources Division), and Christopher Estes (retired former Chief of the Statewide Aquatic Resources Coordination Unit for



## Idaho AFS 2026 Annual Meeting Summary (Continued)

ADF&G and Instream Flow Council Director-At-Large). Christopher ended the plenary by highlighting the recent creation of the National Center for Ecologically Sustainable Water Conservation and Management endorsed by AFS.

Continuing to help advance fisheries and aquatic sciences, the remainder of the meeting consisted of 51 oral presentations, of which 16 were by students, 25 poster presentations (14 by students), and seven tech talks by our meeting sponsors. Luke Anderson won the best student presentation award, and Jack Stafford won best student poster. Nick Voss won the best professional presentation award, and Jerri Cowapoo won best professional poster. The ICAFS Mentoring Committee provided students with the opportunity to interact with professionals formally during the Student-Professional Panel Discussion and informally at the Student-Professional Mixer. The mixer featured student-professional teams engaging in a round of trivia and a belly-laugh-inducing round of “telephone”, where the objective was to draw a simple picture on your teammates' paper-lined back, repeating this process across the team, until the final, hilariously different picture. Other activities included a 5K spawning run along the beautiful, but cold Snake River Greenbelt, tours of the CRITFC Genetics Lab Trailer, and a highly successful fundraising banquet, masterfully pulled off by the ICAFS Fundraising Committee, which netted over \$16,000. In addition, the Idaho Chapter membership voted to approve a bylaw change aimed at improving operational efficiency by voting to make the Treasurer position a 2-year term.

Several chapter members were recognized at the business luncheon for their contribution and service to Idaho's fisheries resources. The Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Rob Van Kirk for his dedication to the Idaho Chapter. Tucker Brauer received the Chapter's Outstanding Fishery Professional Award. The Mentoring Committee awarded Cynthia Nau the Outstanding Mentor Award and Katie McBaine the Outstanding Early Career Professional Award. The Aquatic Habitat Committee awarded an Aquatic Habitat Award that was given to Matt Belnap for significant contributions to fish habitat restoration and enhancement in Idaho. The Excellence in Aquaculture Award, presented by the Aquaculture Committee, was awarded to the Mackay Fish Hatchery Program, specifically Christian



Rob Van Kirk received the 2026 Lifetime Achievement Award



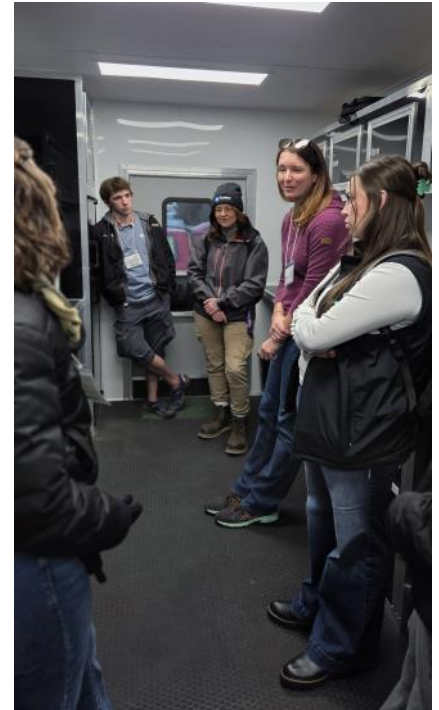
Joe Kozfkay (left), Jake Hughes (middle), and Sage Pike (right) received awards of merit for their service to the chapter.



## Idaho AFS 2026 Annual Meeting Summary (Continued)

Brown, Kelsey Lear, and Stephanie Yeager for their continued efforts toward the advancement of aquaculture. Lastly, the Richard R. Wallace Fish Conservationist of the Year award was given to Brett High of Idaho Fish and Game. There were also several student scholarships awarded to deserving students throughout Idaho. Idaho State University (ISU) graduate student Kaitie Warner won the Susan B. Martin scholarship, and University of Idaho PhD student Jonathan Masingale was awarded the Douglas J. Megargle Memorial Scholarship. The undergraduate student scholarship went to Heather Swartz from ISU, the high school student scholarship was awarded to Madilynn Barnes from Rocky Mountain High School, and two TOP Grants were awarded to Jazmine Cook (BYU-Idaho) and ShanDale Youmans (CWI).

Overall, the 2026 Idaho Chapter AFS meeting would not have been possible without a dedicated group of volunteers and an amazing set of corporate sponsors whose support directly supports the scholarships and grants provided to our students. In summary, the ICAFS meeting provided chapter members an opportunity to connect with colleagues and students, discover how to work with water managers, learn about the most recent fisheries research, and welcome new faces to our fisheries community.



The **2027** ICAFS meeting will be held at the Boise Center in Boise, ID on February 22-25, 2027. Mark your calendars and we hope to see you next year! (see page 11 for more information)

## ICAFS Financial Summary, Fiscal Year 2025-2026

**Communicated by Audrey Harris**

ICAFS operates from an annual operating budget during the fiscal year (generally May 1-April 30) sourced primarily via fundraising income from the previous year's annual meeting. The chapter also maintains a meeting budget, funded primarily through annual meeting registrations. Following the 2026 annual meeting, the chapter shows a surplus of \$3,355 in the operating budget and a net profit of \$24,617 from the annual meeting to go towards the FY2027 operating budget. Despite current economic uncertainty, the chapter's finances remain sound and continue to support our mission.

**ICAFS FY2026 Operating Budget (2025 - 2026)**

| Committees          | Activity/Expenditure                        | Anticipated Expenses | Actual Expenses     |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Education           | Trout in the Classroom                      | \$ 5,000.00          | \$ 1,680.11         |
|                     | High School student scholarship             | \$ 750.00            | \$ 750.00           |
|                     | Undergraduate student scholarship           | \$ 1,500.00          | \$ 1,500.00         |
|                     | Doug J Megargle Scholarship                 | \$ 2,500.00          | \$ 4,000.00         |
|                     | Susan B Martin Scholarship                  | \$ 2,500.00          | \$ 4,000.00         |
|                     | Best Student Presentation                   | \$ 500.00            | \$ 500.00           |
|                     | Best Student Poster                         | \$ 500.00            | \$ 500.00           |
|                     | TOP Grant                                   | \$ 1,000.00          | \$ 553.40           |
| Native Fish         | RL Wallace Award                            | \$ 500.00            | \$ 500.00           |
| Mentoring           | Hutton Junior Fisheries Biology Program     | \$ 5,000.00          | \$ 5,000.00         |
| Aquaculture         | Aquaculture Training Grant                  | \$ 1,000.00          | \$ 450.00           |
| Fundraising         | Fundraising Outlay (seed money)             | \$ 4,500.00          | \$ 3,623.11         |
| 2027 Annual Meeting | Venue Deposit                               | \$ 6,851.25          | \$ 6,851.25         |
| 2028 Annual Meeting | Venue Deposit                               | \$ 2,000.00          | \$ 5,000.00         |
| EXCOM               | In-Person Mtgs                              | \$ 2,000.00          | \$ 196.62           |
|                     | Chapter awards: plaques, certificates, etc. | \$ 3,400.00          | \$ 1,929.15         |
|                     | Best of The West - Student WDAFS            | \$ 1,500.00          | \$ 698.17           |
|                     | 2025 Website overhaul and migration         | \$ 1,500.00          | \$ 1,377.48         |
|                     | ICAFS rep @ WDAFS in-person Excom Mtg       | \$ 500.00            | \$ 536.67           |
|                     | Excom rep @ 2025 Western Division Mtg       | \$ -                 | \$ -                |
|                     | President @ 2025 Society Mtg                | \$ -                 | \$ -                |
| <b>Totals</b>       |                                             | <b>\$ 43,001.25</b>  | <b>\$ 39,645.96</b> |





## ICAFS Financial Summary, FY 2025-2026(continued)

ICAFS 2026 Meeting Budget

| Description                | Idaho Falls<br>2026 |                     | Boise<br>2025        |
|----------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
|                            | Anticipated \$      | Actual \$           | Actual \$            |
| Venue Rooms/Audio/Visual   | \$ 3,200.00         | \$ 2,964.00         | \$ 2,064.00          |
| Registration Expenses      | \$ 300.00           | \$ 207.80           | \$ 217.00            |
| Meeting Swag & Fundraising | \$ 4,000.00         | \$ 2,015.48         | \$ 3,770.00          |
| Bookmarks                  | \$ 400.00           | \$ 56.88            | \$ -                 |
| Logo and Artwork           | \$ 400.00           | \$ 400.00           | \$ 318.00            |
| Spawning Run               | \$ 300.00           | \$ 166.25           | \$ 174.00            |
| Welcome Social             | \$ 10,000.00        | \$ 8,579.60         | \$ 8,221.00          |
| Event Center Costs         | \$ 60,000.00        | \$ 56,258.55        | \$ 77,722.00         |
| Continuing Education       | \$ 2,000.00         | \$ 1,946.31         | \$ 293.00            |
| Tradeshow                  | \$ 1,300.00         | \$ -                | \$ 771.00            |
| Speaker Travel/Room Costs  | \$ 2,000.00         | \$ 1,375.01         | \$ 1,328.00          |
| Budget Buffer (%5)         | \$ 4,195.00         | \$ -                | \$ -                 |
| <b>Total Expenditures</b>  | <b>\$ 88,095.00</b> | <b>\$ 73,969.88</b> | <b>\$ 95,347.00</b>  |
|                            |                     |                     |                      |
| Registration & Fees        |                     | \$ 62,984.62        | \$ 82,725.00         |
| Total Fundraising          |                     | \$ 35,602.64        | \$ 33,994.00         |
| <b>Total Revenue</b>       |                     | <b>\$ 98,587.26</b> | <b>\$ 116,719.00</b> |
|                            |                     |                     |                      |
| <b>Net Profit</b>          |                     | <b>\$ 24,617.38</b> | <b>\$ 21,372.00</b>  |



## Student Spotlights—Palouse Unit

### Cole Pettit

#### Undergraduate Student, U of I

Cole Pettit is a senior at the University of Idaho majoring in Fisheries Resources with an emphasis in hatchery and aquatic management. Throughout his undergraduate studies, he has held several seasonal hatchery positions with the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. While attending the University of Idaho, Cole has also assisted with multiple research projects at the Aquatic Research Institute on campus. He has been actively involved with the Palouse sub-unit of the American Fisheries Society, where he has gained experience in fisheries techniques, built professional connections, and mentored other students. This summer, Cole is working at the Clearwater Hatchery as a trap tender, where he performs a variety of operational duties. After graduating from the University of Idaho, Cole plans to continue gaining experience in hatchery operations across the state, with the long-term goal of becoming a hatchery manager.



## Palouse Unit Update

The students at the Palouse AFS subunit are currently on summer break, and many are actively involved in graduate field work and technician positions across Idaho and beyond. The fall semester will kick off on August 24th, and regular meetings as well as field trips will begin. Prior to summer break new officers were elected and a transfer of power occurred. Current officers include Darby McMartin (president), Siena Axtman (vice president), Adie Wimer (secretary), Noah Frost (treasurer), Jackson Pettit (undergraduate representative), and Garrison Ferone (graduate representative).





## BYU-Idaho Unit Update

The BYU-Idaho AFS subunit hosted multiple kinds of meetings in the winter semester including having Jessie Andrus, a grad student present, doing a White Sturgeon dissection, and having a closing social doing gyotaku. We are now not doing meetings as most of our students are working for agencies like the Forest Service, Idaho Department of Fish and Game, Henry's Fork Foundation, Wyoming Game and Fish, and more. We will start meeting again in September as we start the fall semester with plans to do meetings on why to join AFS, backpack electroshocking introduction, and fish identification.

Rose Chandler

BYU-Idaho AFS subunit president





## Committee/Subunit Updates

### *Public Education Committee (by Lauri Monnot and Sean Wilson)*

The Public Education Committee annually administers two support grants provided by the Idaho Chapter AFS. Both are currently accepting applications.

#### **Aquatic Education/Trout in the Classroom Grant**

Schools can apply for grants to assist with classroom education projects or pay for bus transportation for classroom field trips to learn about aquatic resources and release trout raised in Idaho Trout, Steelhead, or Kokanee in the Classroom programs. For more information see <https://wp.idahoafs.org/wp/aquatic-education-trout-in-the-classroom-grants/>

We awarded two classroom support grants. The first went to Everwild Forest School in Boise. The grant will support this unique outdoor classroom water quality, fish, and macroinvertebrate sampling supplies to use for K-12 and community education classes. A second support grant was awarded to Ririe Junior-Senior High School to expand their classroom aquaculture program with a larger tank for longer term and more in-depth study of trout and aquaculture.

This spring, field trip grants were awarded to 8 schools allowing about 430 students in grades 2-12 to get outside and learn more about fisheries resources. Classrooms got a chance to practice angling skills, learn to clean and cook fish, tour fish hatcheries, visit education centers, and participate in educational activities mentored by fisheries professionals.

#### **Student TOP grant**

The purpose of the grant is to help students carry out activities consistent with the mission of the Idaho Chapter. This may include conducting research outside degree requirements, implementing education projects, attending a professional conference, workshop, or training, or other activities. Applications are accepted throughout the year until the full \$1,000 allotment is awarded. For more information see <https://wp.idahoafs.org/wp/icafs-student-training-opportunity-and-project-top-grant/>

#### **Student Scholarships**

Please congratulate the recipients of the 2026 Idaho Chapter scholarships and grant:

##### **Douglas J. Megargle Scholarship**

Jon Masingale-University of Idaho

##### **Susan B. Martin Mentoring Scholarship**

Kaitie Warner-Idaho State University

##### **ICAFS Undergraduate Scholarship**

Heather Swartz-Idaho State University

##### **ICAFS High School Scholarship**

Madilynn Barnes-Rocky Mountain High School

##### **IACFS Student Training Opportunity & Project (TOP) Grant**

Jasmine Cook-BYU-Idaho

ShanDale Youmans-College of Western Idaho



## Committee/Subunit Updates

### *Mentoring Committee (Co-chaired by Will Lubenau, Anthony Dangora, and Katherine Coykendall)*

The mentoring committee was busy again this year at the ICAFS 2026 conference. We hosted the student/professional mixer and facilitated interaction with a game of Pictionary-meets-telephone and some eastern Idaho trivia. Thank you to very capable emcees, Anthony Dangora and Brett Kelly. A good time was had by all.



Our professional panel fielded questions from students about a career in fisheries. Thank you to Ilana Koch (CRITFC), John Loffredo (ID Water Resources Board), Hannah Murphy (Trout Unlimited), Steve Stowell (IDFG), and Dmitri Vidergar (US Bureau of Reclamation) for sharing your experience and expertise (photo left, below).



On behalf of the chapter, the mentoring committee awarded Cynthia Nau the Outstanding Mentor Award and Katie McBaine the Outstanding Early Career Professional Award. Congratulations (photo right, above)!

Finally, we organized 13 mock interviews for students hoping to enter the job market as a technician, biologist, or fish culturist. Many conference attendees volunteered to be interviewers and provide a true-to-life professional interviewing experience. Thank you to Matt Campbell, Luciano Chiamonte, Anthony Dangora, Rachel Fricke, Lanie Galland, Eric Geisthardt, Courtne Ghere, Ryan Hardy, Lance Hebdon, Wes Keller, John Loffredo, Will Lubenau, Sarah Maher, Zak Robinson, Troy Smith, Jeff Stratt, Sage Unsworth, Rachael Valeria, Rob Van Kirk, Melissa Wagner, and Cassi Wood.





## Upcoming Fisheries Meetings Of Interest

### 2027 Joint Annual Meeting of Idaho Wildlife Society and American Fisheries Society

February 22-25, 2027 | Boise, Idaho

**Advancing Conservation: Connecting People and Perspectives Across Idaho**

#### CALL FOR SPECIAL SESSIONS INPUT DUE JULY 10th

The meeting planning team invites proposals for special sessions/symposia. Session topics related to joint fish and wildlife disciplines are encouraged, but other topics will be considered. If you would like to propose and organize a special session, please use the Google Drive [link](#) to provide details, including a title and brief description of your topic. Deadline for proposals will be July 10, 2026. If you have any questions, please reach out to Brandon Flack ([president.elect.ictws@gmail.com](mailto:president.elect.ictws@gmail.com)) and Rebekah Horn ([rhorn@critfc.org](mailto:rhorn@critfc.org)).

#### CALLING ALL ARTISTS!!!

We are also requesting logo designs for the 2027 annual meeting! Your artwork will grace the program as well as the coffee mugs, water bottles, and/or laptops of conference attendees (there will be stickers!). If your design is selected, you will be awarded **\$500.00**. The submission deadline is **July 31, 2026**. Designs are encouraged to incorporate themes representative of the conference city, theme, and/or Idaho at large. Designs must include the name of the host city (Boise), the organization names (ICAFS/ICTWS), the year (2027), and fish and wildlife native to Idaho. It may also include the theme (*Advancing Conservation: Connecting People and Perspectives Across Idaho*). Features must be clear and the design can only include 1-4 colors or gray scale. The artist must hold exclusive rights to the entire artwork and original works of art will be given preference over AI generated works. Preferred file formats in order of preference are: Adobe Illustrator files originally created as vector files (.ai), vector files saved as PDF (.pdf), or vector files saved as Encapsulated Post Script (.eps). Other formats that can work must be at least 200 dpi and only 1-2 colors: .jpg/.jpeg, .psd, or .gif.

Please send your designs to Brandon Flack ([president.elect.ictws@gmail.com](mailto:president.elect.ictws@gmail.com)) and Rebekah Horn ([rhorn@critfc.org](mailto:rhorn@critfc.org)).



The Idaho Department of Fish and Game will host the 2026 SOBA Education and Training Symposium, August 24-27 in Boise, Idaho. For more information contact Eric Stark at [eric.stark@idfg.idaho.gov](mailto:eric.stark@idfg.idaho.gov) or click the link

[Symposium - States Organization for Boating Access](#)



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**The EXCOM wants your ideas!**

**Please do not hesitate to contact any  
EXCOM member about questions or ideas.**

**This is your Chapter!**

*Advancing fisheries and aquatic science and promoting the development of fisheries professionals*

