Slide #1: Greetings from your AFS Officers and the AFS headquarters office in Bethesda, Maryland! We thank you for giving us a few minutes to say hello during your unit meeting and to provide you with and update on AFS and our many activities. Thank you also for being a member of your chapter, and we hope you enjoy your time at your chapter’s meeting!

Slide #2: As a fisheries professional, you spend your time dedicated to research and management in the field, lab, and in your agency’s offices. While you spend time every day thinking about species, populations, habitats and much more in freshwater or marine settings….

Slide #3: ...have you ever felt lost at sea as a professional?

Where can you go for the latest information related to your field? Who is out there advocating for professionalism? Where do you go to find information about jobs and training?

Slide #4: We suggest that you think of making the American Fisheries Society more than just the chapter meeting you attend, which I would agree is important, but to think about AFS as your professional home!

Slide #5 I hope that each of you recognize that there is much more to AFS than chapters! If you enjoy the benefits you receive from your local chapter, consider joining the American Fisheries Society at the national level! AFS is a national professional membership association for fisheries professionals, with a governing board and full-time staff working for the membership. You will be joining over 8000 members, primarily from the US and Canada, who work towards common goals of improving research, best practices, and sustainable management of fisheries resources.

Slide #6: AFS members have a range of backgrounds and expertise and include aquaculturists, biologists, ecologists, economists, engineers, fisheries managers, geneticists and social scientists.

AFS members represent Federal and State government agencies, commercial operations, academic institutions, research firms, student groups and media outlets.

Sounds like an interesting group, you’re thinking, but what’s in it for me? What is included in my membership?

Slide #7: AFS members may access all 5 of the Society’s journals online, plus Fisheries Magazine. For those of you who like the convenience of a printed magazine, Fisheries will still be delivered to your mailbox as a monthly publication.

AFS is also one of the worlds largest and most respected publishers of fisheries science books. Most commercial publishers shy away from printing books on subject such as the Evolutionary Biology and Taxonomy of Cutthroat Trout or the Standard Operating Procedures for Rotenone. These publishers simply don’t sell enough copies to justify the cost in printing these titles. Fortunately, AFS does this and considers it a critical part of supporting you and the fisheries profession. Without AFS, these books simply wouldn’t be printed.

Slide #8: You will also receive discounted registration for continuing education courses; recent courses have included GIS and Intro to R. In late 2017, AFS added a monthly webinar series to its education line up. Members may join sessions live and access webinar recordings via the Society’s website. By supporting AFS, you’re gaining support for your professional growth and productivity, which in turn helps your agency and the profession - talk about a win-win.

Slide #9: Speaking of discounts, AFS members enjoy a reduced registration fee for the national Annual Meeting. The Meeting features the latest science presented as abstracts during symposia, as well as plenary sessions. In addition, attendees can participate in networking events to catch up with colleagues and potentially meet collaborators for future projects! Some members qualify to apply for grants to help offset travel costs to the Annual Meeting!

Slide #10: In 2019, we’re doing things a little differently for the Annual Meeting. AFS will be joining with The Wildlife Society for a joint meeting in Reno, Nevada. This momentous event will likely be the largest gathering to date of wildlife and fisheries biologist and managers! We hope to see you September! Of course, we recognize that attending the Society’s annual meeting may not be possible for many of you due to travel constraints but there is much more about AFS that is beneficial even if you can’t attend in person.

Slide #11: Since AFS is made of a community of fisheries professionals, your membership presents opportunities within the Society to meet fish folk with similar interests. You already know about your local chapter, but there are also four geographic divisions within AFS, all of which host some sort of annual meeting within their region and often these are easier to attend than the national meeting. Furthermore, if you have an interest in say, Fish Health, Genetics, Fish Culture, or any one of 23 different subject areas you can join an AFS section that focuses on those special interests. You are free to join as many sections as you’d like!

Slide #12: You know that you should keep track of policy and legislation related to aquatic conservation - these issues matter and have an impact upon your ability to do your job - but sometimes work and life get in the way. As another member benefit, AFS helps support government programs on behalf of fisheries professionals. Sometimes AFS is one a few voices, if not the only voice, which is advocating for fisheries science and management.

Slide #13: For example, AFS has actively supported robust funding for the USGS Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Units after the Trump Administration sought to eliminate all 40 units in 38 states. To do this, AFS met with USGS Director Jim Reilly, The Office of Management and Budget, and sent letters to Congress stressing the importance of the units to fisheries professionals and urging them to support funding for critical program vacancies.

Slide #14: AFS directed significant time and effort in support of the Recovering America’s Wildlife Act, a bill that calls for dedicated funding for state agencies to conduct proactive fish and wildlife conservation. AFS efforts to support this bill included holding dozens of meetings on Capitol Hill, releasing a new report with The National Wildlife Federation and The Wildlife Society on the wildlife crisis, and conducting an educational Capitol Hill briefing on the report.

Slide #15: AFS worked closely with conservation partners in opposition to proposed roll-backs of the Clean Water Rule. Actions included developing an important synthesis paper on the value of Headwater Streams, submitting regulatory comments and helping to educate members and the public about the importance of federal protection of small streams and wetlands for fish and wildlife.

It’s also important to note that AFS leadership frequently meets with and informs state and federal agency directors on the importance of fisheries professionalism, training, and support. The point here is that, without AFS, an important voice would be missing.

Slide #16: By joining AFS, you’re joining a long history of practitioners in fisheries and a legacy of members working in freshwater and marine conservation. The Society was started by fisheries biologists, for fisheries biologists and has continued addressing the common needs of all within the profession to the present day. AFS will be celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2020, with a year of commemorations that kick off at the Reno-Tahoe meeting. We’re proud of this history spanning a century and a half, and we need your help and commitment to ensure the future of fisheries for the next 150 years! The future is uncertain, and we urge you to join with the organization that is as concerned about the future of your profession as you are.

Slide #17: Wait, you’re still not convinced? There’s no need to take our word for it. Here are a few comments from members!

Slide #18: From Aaron Martin, with the Fish and Wildlife Service in Anchorage, Alaska: “*My Alaska Chapter requires full AFS membership because we saw the clear benefits. We can simply do more…with more resources.”*

Slide #19: *“Being a part of the AFS community means having access to the professional network, tools, and knowledge needed to address the complexities of fisheries conservation.”* says Jesse Trushenski, from Bozeman, Montana.

Slide #20: Remember that AFS as an organization is dependent upon volunteers for continuity. We depend on volunteer leadership to set the course of the organization! As a new member, we know that it can seem intimidating to become involved for the first time with “several thousand of your closest friends”. Suggestions for becoming involved towards the beginning of your membership with AFS include joining a committee or mentoring a student at a local or national event. Your commitment ensures the future of the Society, the profession, and the quality of aquatic resources for future generations.

Slide #21: With all of this in mind and as we approach the 150th anniversary of the Society, we look forward to having you aboard as an AFS member! Additional information regarding membership is available on the AFS website, or feel free to contact our membership team.

Slide #22: In closing, we thank you again for giving us a few minutes of your time today. Enjoy the rest of your time with your chapter!