**Fall EXCOM Business Meeting**

**September 1, 2023 (11:15 am – 2:15 pm)**

**O’Malley’s Irish Grill**

**803 Harkrider St. Suite 12**

**Conway, AR 72032**

President Brie Olsen welcomed the group and called the meeting to order. Those in attendance were Allison Asher, Christy Graham, Dylan Hann, Sean Lusk, Josh Melton and Brie Olsen.

**Officer Reports**

*Secretary’s Report – Allison Asher*

Allison reported that a call for applications for the Natural State Fisheries Scholarship will go out in October.

*Treasurer’s report – Sean Lusk*

Sean reported that the account balance for the investment account was $10,657.34. The group agreed to withdraw $500 from the investment account and set it aside for the 2024 Natural State Fisheries Scholarship. The Chapter donated $500 to the AFS Hutton Junior Fisheries Biology Program. The Chapter also covered the travel costs for the instructors of the Chapter sponsored Invasive Aquatic Plant Identification and Control Workshop that was held August 9, 2023.

**ARAFS – 2023 EXCOM Treasurer’s Report**

**Covering 5/12/23 – 8/31/23**

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| --- | --- |
| **Balance Brought Forward (9/1/2023):** | **$15,184.37** |
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| **INCOME** |  |
| Interest | $20.00 |
| AFS Dues | $70.00 |
| AFS Payout | $168.00 |
| Payout | $25.00 |
|  |  |
| **Total Income** | **$283.00** |
| **SUBTOTAL** | **$15467.37** |
|  |  |
| **DISBURSEMENTS** |  |
| Checks | $439.38 |
| Fees | $18.04 |
| EXCOM Meeting | $288.39 |
| Hutton Donation | $500.00 |
| WildApricot | $810.00 |
|  |  |
| **Total Disbursements** | **$2,055.81** |
|  |  |
| **Balance as of September 1, 2023:** | **$13,411.5** |
|  |  |
| **Investment Account Balance as of September 1, 2023** | **$10,657.34** |

**Appointed Officer Reports** *– No Reports*

**Committee Reports**

*Nominating and Awards Committee – Christy Graham, Chair*

Christy will send an announcement for nominations for Chapter officers and awards in the next few weeks. One nomination has already been submitted for the Robert M. Jenkins Award for Outstanding Conservation Achievement. The deadline for nominations will be October 20, 2023. Christy will also reach out to Tyler Thomsen to verify that the application for Outstanding Subunit is accessible on the Chapter webpage.

*Activities and Raffle Committee – Jacob Martin and Josh Melton*

The Chapter hosted an Invasive Aquatic Plant Identification and Control workshop on August 9, 2023. There were 45 participants and four instructors in attendance. The workshop covered invasive plant identification and control techniques, as well as prevention and reporting of invasive species. Each participant received a copy of the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Foundation's Biology and Control of Aquatic Plants:  A Best Management Practices Handbook. A huge THANK YOU goes out to Matt Horton for organizing the workshop! Matt did an incredible job organizing and implementing the workshop!

The group discussed holding a virtual fishing challenge, an idea Jacob proposed via email to EXCOM. Jacob suggested increasing participation by having everyone submit photos of all hook and line catches, not just large fish. All participants could be placed in a drawing for prizes. Will Lancett suggested via email that the fishing challenge be a team event, with points awarded to the largest fish of each species and point values varying by species. Josh supported the fishing challenge as a team event and further suggested that teams be randomly drawn to encourage networking among AFS members. As discussed in prior Chapter EXCOM meetings, Sean suggested that participants receive a free raffle ticket for each photo submission or for each photo of a new species caught, up to an undetermined number. All participants/teams who catch at least three species could be placed in a drawing for a sheet of raffle tickets. The participant who submits the most species caught could also win a free sheet of raffle tickets. The activities committee will take these suggestions and refine the fishing challenge. A downfall of the last virtual fishing event was a lack of advertisement for the event. For a virtual fishing challenge to be successful, the event needs to be advertised frequently on the Chapter webpage and via email and social media.

Jacob has also previously proposed that the Chapter host a two day swift water skills class. The first day would teach swift water rescue and the second day would teach boating safety scenarios in swift water. Jacob received a quote from a local instructor for $200 per person with a max of 20 participants per class. The group had a thorough discussion regarding funding and participation. The discussion about funding focused on how much of the class fee the Chapter should cover, if any. Since swift water rescue is required for most Arkansas Game and Fish Commission fisheries employees, the group discussed prioritizing students and other members who wouldn’t have the course offered by an employer. The final resolution was to gauge interest in a one day class offered as a student activity. Brie will ask Chelsea to reach out to professors and ask if they would be interested in sending students to this course and if professors would help pay for students to attend this course.

Josh reported that a donation spreadsheet has been created and asked the group to be thinking of places that could donate items to the raffle. Josh presented the idea of a mystery box as a raffle item, which was supported by EXCOM.

*Environmental Affairs Committee and Education Liaison Committee – No reports*.

**Subunit Reports** – *No Reports*

**Old Business**

*Workshop Ideas*

EXCOM had previously discussed hosting an Introduction to R workshop taught by member Ryan Gary. Many AGFC employees attended this workshop in August as part of the annual Fisheries Division Meeting. Christy will look at the list of people who originally expressed interest in this workshop and see how many of those were AGFC employees. If there is a sufficient number of members left on the list, then the Chapter will host this workshop in the fall.

*Workshop Fees*

Attendance at the Invasive Aquatic Plant workshop was free for members. However, nonmembers did register and attend. An announcement was made at the workshop asking nonmembers to join the Arkansas Chapter of AFS so that the Chapter can continue to offer trainings like the invasive plant workshop. All workshop participants did become members of the Chapter. However, in the future, all workshops will have an online registration process, with a fee for nonmembers due with registration. The fee for nonmembers will be higher than the Chapter’s membership fee to encourage participants to become members of the Chapter to receive the free or reduced registration fee for workshops.

*Logo Update*

The Chapter updated its logo to reflect the changes in the AFS logo. Thus, the logo needs to be updated on the webpage, social media pages, and on all Chapter meeting materials (signs, banners, awards, etc.).

*Old Chapter Documents*

There is a plastic storage tub of old Chapter documents that is typically passed from one secretary to the next. Brie has been working to have these documents digitized. Once finished, Brie will ask Tyler to upload these documents to the webpage. Business meeting minutes, meeting programs, and newsletters from the previous 10 years will be available online.

*Environmental Affairs Committee Chair and Newsletter Editor*

The Environmental Affairs Committee Chair is vacant and Brie will contact Dr. Erin Thayer to see if she is interested in volunteering for this committee position. A newsletter editor will be needed this year and Brie will ask Katie Schrag if she is interested in filling this role.

**New Business**

*Chapter Facebook Page*

While discussing the virtual fishing event, it was brought up that the Chapter does not have a Facebook page. Brie will ask Dr. Kyler Hecke, the Chapter’s social media coordinator, if he would like to create and maintain a Facebook page for the Chapter and if not, then Will Lancett will be asked if he would like to create and maintain a Chapter Facebook page.

*2024 Chapter Meeting*

The 2024 Chapter meeting will be held at the Holiday Inn Texarkana Arkansas Convention Center. There is no down payment required for the meeting space. As long as the Chapter fills the 60 room block, audio visual and meeting space rental will be free. Alcoholic beverages can be served if they are donated to the Chapter. Food from outside vendors is also allowed. The Chapter will purchase snacks from Sam’s for breaks. If the Chapter cannot secure donated beverages, two drink tickets per person will be offered. Tickets will cover beer or wine only. The Pam Setser Band, which includes Chapter member Kent Coffey, will play at the social. The chapter will compensate the singer and pay for lodging for the band. Food for the social will likely be a crawfish boil. Dylan is working to get food trucks at the hotel for lunch so that attendees won’t need to go offsite for lunch, as options within walking distance are limited. Dylan is also exploring if a baggo tournament can be hosted during the social. Abstract submission will be through a fillable form, which will limit the number of words and keep formatting consistent across submissions. Late-registration will close earlier than in previous years to aid in finalizing meeting logistics and avoid last minute changes. Also, to deter excessive registrations at the meeting, the fee to register onsite will be higher than the late registration fee.

The registration form will ask if one is attending the social and the banquet to aid in meal planning.

Google forms will be used for judging talks and posters. If judges prefer, paper forms will be given, but the judges will be responsible for entering the final scores into a google form.

*Outstanding Subunit Awards*

A nomination form will be created by Christy Graham for the outstanding subunit member award. Only active subunit members will be eligible for these awards.

*Donation/scholarship approval criteria*

Following the Chapter procedure manual: The EXCOM shall consider all requests for donations or sponsorships on behalf of the Chapter. The EXCOM shall have the power to approve donations and sponsorships under the guidelines of $500 per individual request and $2,000 total per year. These maximum totals are dependent on Chapter revenues at the time of the request and other anticipated expenses, and are not benchmarks that have to be met or honored annually. Furthermore, each individual request is considered on a case by case basis, and prioritized as 1) divisional and national AFS meetings, 2) special symposia of broad interest to Chapter membership, and 3) AFS mission-related projects hosted in Arkansas. Support for publication of books, monographs, or other such publications also will be considered on a case by case basis. Priority will be given for publications most strongly connected to Arkansas or of the broadest interest to Chapter membership. An announcement reminding members of these donations and sponsorships will be placed in the newsletter. The Chapter will consider providing travel assistance to meetings, up to $250, under priority 1 above.

EXCOM members discussed various raffle items or 50/50 raffles to hold at the Chapter meeting to fund an additional $500 scholarship.