

Fabrizio Elected AFS President

VIMS Associate Professor Mary Fabrizio has been elected President of the 9,000-member American Fisheries Society (AFS), the oldest and largest association of fisheries professionals in the world.

Fabrizio's research at VIMS focuses on the population dynamics of finfish. She also manages the Institute's juvenile fish surveys, which have since 1955 played an important role in helping to manage Chesapeake Bay's fish populations.

VIMS Dean and Director John Wells says "Mary's leadership in AFS is clear proof of her stature in the fisheries community, and reflects well on the high quality of our faculty."



Mary Fabrizio

Fabrizio used the first of her "President's Hook" columns in the September issue of *Fisheries*, the Society's monthly magazine, to describe an ambitious work plan during her tenure in the AFS's top spot.

Fabrizio notes that she will take steps to ensure that AFS will be ready to address future challenges in the fields of science, policy, and human resources. She will focus on efforts to promote sound stewardship of fisheries resources, provide clear channels for communicating science-based information to stakeholders, and provide cost-efficient services for AFS members.

Fabrizio has a particular interest in enhancing AFS activities internationally. She recently represented AFS at the first meeting of its new Mexican Chapter, and plans an active role for the Society at the 5th World Fisheries Congress in Yokohama, Japan in October 2008. This five-day conference will focus on current global issues in fisheries, including aquaculture, biotechnology, biodiversity and management, and climate change and fisheries.

"The World Fisheries Congress, and other jointly sponsored meetings, can serve as platforms from which publications, briefings, and policy statements on stewardship issues may be developed," writes Fabrizio.

Domestically, she plans to promote aquatic stewardship through continued AFS support of the National Fish Habitat Action Plan, a broad coalition of US conservation groups; universities; industry partners; and federal, state, local, and tribal agencies.

Fabrizio will also promote a continued shift toward electronic communication of AFS findings, including creation of an open-access electronic journal in coastal and marine fisheries. AFS already publishes several leading peer-reviewed print journals, including *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society*, *North American Journal of Fisheries Management*, *North American Journal of Aquaculture*, and the *Journal of Aquatic Animal Health*.

Digital communications, writes Fabrizio, can "deliver fisheries information to professionals working in remote areas or in parts of the world where one of the few links to science-based information is through the Internet. Such information strengthens the knowledge base upon which we manage our resources."

Another part of Fabrizio's plan is to develop strategies for recruitment and training of student leaders. "AFS has taken significant steps towards improving opportunities for student contributions to Society activities, including participation at meetings, involvement with publications, and serving in leadership roles," writes Fabrizio. She envisions developing a cadre of new leaders to champion member needs, and ensuring leadership development opportunities for AFS members.

Fabrizio, a founding member of the AFS Equal Opportunities Section, will also strive as President to include underrepresented groups in AFS governance.

Fabrizio's tenure as AFS president caps a five-year commitment to the Society—with a two-year term as vice president, and a year each as President-elect, President, and Past President. Each term of office brings a growing number of assignments. To date, Fabrizio has chaired 7 AFS committees and served on 19 others.

During her career, Fabrizio has published more than 30 peer-reviewed publications and 26 technical reports. She is a fellow with the American Institute of Fishery Research Biologists, a member of the Board of Directors for the Fisheries Conservation Foundation, and served as President of the AFS Marine Fisheries Section from 2002-2004.

VIMS BY THE NUMBERS

VIMS Juvenile Fish Survey

Data collected by the VIMS Juvenile Fish Survey are instrumental to fisheries management at the state and federal level. After each tow, survey scientists quickly return the fishes to the water. For more information, visit www.fisheries.vims.edu/rawlseine/vimspage.htm

- 52** Consecutive years of survey operation (1955-2007), making it the longest-running research survey for marine and estuarine fishes in the U.S.
- 30** Width (in feet) of the otter trawl opening used in survey tows
- 35,080** Total number of sampling tows made between 1955-2007
- 5** Length of survey tows, in minutes
- 26,671** Potential tow sites in Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Actual sites are selected randomly.
- 1,211** Tows completed during the 2005-06 project year
- 417,000** Number of fishes and invertebrates counted in 2005-06
- 227** Total fish species identified in the Bay during survey's 52-year history
- 105** Species identified in 2005-06
- 70** Number of species commonly observed
- 5** Species most commonly observed: Bay anchovy, hogchoker, Atlantic croaker, spot, and white perch
- 1.5** Size (in inches) of mesh openings in survey trawl net
- 12** Measurements taken during each tow (in addition to fish length): latitude and longitude, depth, tidal stage, water clarity, air temperature, wind direction, wind speed, weather conditions, sea state, water temperature, salinity, and dissolved oxygen.

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measures that form the basis of many environmental indicators. "But," he says "the estimated population of a particular animal, say amphipods or mummichogs, within a particular patch of habitat is generally not significant information when the issue involves whether to allow alterations for economic development or shoreline protection."

"The information that science brings is all good," says Varnell, "but it may go beyond the use of management. A lot of the institutional barriers are not a matter of too much information, but of information that is not directly relevant to the specific issue requiring a management decision."

A final consideration, the pair write, is that environmental indicators should "reliably supply valid indicator data to those who need it when they need it."

Doing so requires that planners consider the physical requirements for data collection and maintenance, identify the entity that will interpret the data and what authority an interpretation has, and define how information should flow from data interpreters to decision makers.

Overall, says Varnell, VIMS has been a leader in developing and applying environmental indicators that recognize and overcome institutional barriers. "Because of our state advisory service mandate, VIMS has long been the functional link between marine science and management in the Commonwealth. So we are, in a sense, not only the developer and interpreter of indicators, but can also be considered as the indicator. The advice that VIMS provides has been incorporated as the indicator of potential environmental impact. I think that's pretty significant. That's the history of how VIMS has defined its role."