

Summer, 2002 - This issue was submitted by [Dr. Mark Kopeny](#), with written contributions from Price Smith, Tom Gunter, Shelly Miller, Mike Pinder, and Wendy Smith.

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The President's Report
by Price Smith

Our Chapter is well into its second decade of existence and has much to be proud of and much to look forward to in the future. We have matured into one of the best AFS chapters in the country, and I am proud to be a member and excited about where this chapter is headed.

I heard several mottoes over the last several weeks and thought they might exemplify the direction and purpose of VCAFS. The first I heard was "think fresh, think big" and several days later I heard "let's get started". Whatever their source, they are good ideas and good mandates to follow. I think that it is my mandate, as your Chapter President, to always think fresh (look for new ideas), think big (never be satisfied with the ordinary), and get started (do today what you could have left to tomorrow).

I want to thank *all* of you, our members, for your dedication to the fisheries sciences, the parent society of AFS, and VCAFS. I look forward to working with all of you over the next twelve months as we continue to build on our past successes and explore new, exciting activities.

Summary of the February 2002 VCAFS Business Meeting

The EXCOM meeting, organized by Price Smith and Alan Weaver, was held in Virginia Beach, VA. A total of 42 participants registered for the event.

Treasurer's Report (Bob Greenlee) - The investment value in the Chapter's Fidelity Asset Manager Account decreased by \$499 between February 2001 and February 2002. Total VCAFS assets (including both investment and checking accounts) as of February, 10 2002 was \$11,943.

Awards Committee Report (Chas Gowan) - VCAFS annually presents awards and scholarships to deserving individuals or organizations. Our two Chapter awards are Professional Biologist and Conservationist (non-professional); our two scholarships are for a graduate and an undergraduate who are excelling in their studies. Sherry Zanguench won the annual VCAFS undergraduate award. Sherry graduated this spring from Randolph-Macon College. As an undergraduate, Sherry completed two internships and was the recipient of last year's Best Paper Award. Dave Hopler was awarded the VCAFS Graduate Scholarship of \$500. Dave is a graduate student at VCU, having come to Virginia from Alaska. His M.S. thesis focuses on the MSB project on the James River. Big M Bassmasters Club received the Chapter's annual Conservation Award for their efforts in the Virginia Shad project, various VDOT projects, education programs, and other initiatives. The Professional Biologist's Award was given to Don Kain, who holds degrees from West Virginia University, Virginia Tech and Texas Tech. This award recognizes Don's contributions in stream recovery in the Shenandoah and South Rivers. Congratulations to all of this year's award recipients!

Communications Committee Report (Shelly Miller) - If you have problems using the listserv, contact Shelly at smiller@dgif.state.va.us. Send submissions for the listserv to .va-afs@listserv.vt.edu. Increasingly, chapter communications are handled electronically; most chapter members have access to email and the internet. Those that do not will continue to receive newsletters via U.S. Mail. Scott Matthews, formerly with VDGIF and now with the National Aquarium in DC, is the new webmaster for the VCAFS webpage. Scott developed a very professional looking site for the Chapter, which can be found at <http://faculty.virginia.edu/vcafs>. We are all indebted to Scott for the time and effort he has put into this project. John Odenkirk reported on the two continuing education classes that he had scheduled for the spring.

Environmental Affairs Committee Report (Paul Bugas) - Paul reported on a letter he drafted regarding exotic species releases into Lake Moomaw.

Membership Committee Report (Paul Bugas) - Paul reported on chapter membership, which declined through the late 1990's, but is now rebounding. The 2001 membership breaks down as follows: one third are state employees, one third are in academia, and one third are federal government, private citizens or industry. The chapter should be able to sustain a membership of about 130 individuals into the foreseeable future.

Nominating Committee Report (John Copeland) - John reported on the close race for chapter president, between Mark Hudy and Steve Reeser. Mark Hudy won. Congratulations Mark!

Motion to accept committee reports was accepted.

Old Business - VCAFS cooperated with the national chapter of AFS in a membership initiative that involved identifying individuals that are local but not national members.

Paul Bugas reported on a local chapter project being spearheaded by Mike Pinder. Mike requested that the Chapter sponsor a public education sign to be placed on a wetland in the Patrick County Park. The sign will bear the chapter logo and will carry information on the influence of wetlands on stream water quality. A proposal to move forward with design and implementation was accepted, and Paul agreed to take the project to completion for the Chapter.

Becky Wajda reported that letters were drafted and sent to the VA Congressional delegation supporting CARA legislation. The bill was stalled in congress; the plan was to meet with legislators to get the bill moving again. (Editor's note: the bill is still stalled; the national coalition supporting CARA is focusing its efforts on finding another year of funding, as a stopgap measure)

New Business - Price Smith was installed as president. Price proposed three new committees: 1) *A Best Chapter Committee*. This would be an ad hoc committee whose major objective would be to increase the likelihood of VCAFS winning the parent society's "Best Chapter Award". Bud LaRoche agreed to chair such a committee, and the membership was in general agreement that this is a good idea, 2) *An Ad Hoc Finance Committee*. This committee would review the last five years of chapter finances in order to assess the chapter's fiscal health and detect trends. This committee would work with the EXCOM to redevelop a chapter budget, and 3) *A Standing Outreach Committee*. One important mission of this committee would be to prepare educational material and programs about aquatic resource protection and then disseminate to high schools and other likely target audiences. A second, related mission would be to promote fisheries professions and to support other conservation organizations in their efforts. Paul Bugas agreed to chair this committee, which would be closely related to the membership committee, also chaired by Paul. A motion to proceed with formation of this new standing committee was passed.

Price has been talking with the Virginia Tech chapter about the possibility of a joint 2003 meeting, and suggested a joint meeting with the North Carolina Chapter as an alternative. Indications thus far are that Virginia Tech is receptive to the idea.

Spring of 2002 Shad Runs Considered an All-Around Success

by Tom Gunter

Anglers and biologists alike were delighted with this spring's spawning run of anadromous shad on the James and Rappahannock rivers. Russ Cress, professional fishing guide in the City of Richmond, reported landing and releasing over 2,800

hickory shad this spring on the James alone, along with catching and releasing nearly 200 Americans. Fishing pressure within the James River fall line was heavy all spring, drawing as many as 50 boats per day during weekends. The spawning run of American shad in the James surprised fishermen and pleased Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) officials with one of the strongest runs in over three decades. With this good news, however, comes some reason for concern. Of the 138 adult shad otoliths collected in the James fall line, nearly 91% were of hatchery origin. Tagged fish carried OTC marks used to distinguish shad stocked into the James, indicating that the hatchery program is supporting the American shad run in the upper James River at this point. This trend should reverse itself, however, over the next 5-10 years as cohorts from heavier stocking years reach maturity and their offspring are recruited to the James River fishery.

Egg taking operations for the hatchery program, as well, were very successful on the Pamunkey River this spring, collecting a record breaking 30 million eggs. The unusual hot weather in mid-April, however, created fertility problems with the eggs during the peak of the run. This problem resulted in an overall reduction of hatchery success rates. In spite of this problem, 12.1 million American shad fry (3rd highest stocking rate since the program began in 1992) were produced and stocked into the James and Pamunkey rivers, with the James receiving 8.8 million.

VDGIF officials are also reporting a successful shad run through the Boshers Dam fishway this spring. According to Alan Weaver, Fish Passage Coordinator, American shad began running through the Boshers facility on April 18th, with a single day record of 179 shad making their way through the fishway on April 23rd. Monitoring of video taken from the facility viewing window continues and should be completed in June. The hope is that the strong run of shad observed in the James River fall line made their way through the fishway and onto spawning grounds far upstream from this impediment.

BioBlitz Roars through Chesterfield County

by Shelly Miller

Over a 24-hour period from noon on May 11 to noon on May 12, biologists (including members of VCAFS) combed the landscape of Pocahontas State Park counting all species great and small. This was all part of an event called BioBlitz, held in celebration of Biodiversity Month. The goal of a BioBlitz is to identify as many species as possible in some predefined area in a 24-hour time frame. At Pocahontas State Park in Chesterfield County, taxonomic experts spanning the range from slime molds, spiders, mammals, and fishes came out to lend a hand. The fish crew was successful at finding 30 species plus 1 hybrid. We also had the opportunity to show off some of our finds to interested adults and children that had stopped by the event.

They were amazed by the variety of creatures we found in Swift Creek, particularly the stunning bluehead chubs in full breeding regalia, the case-building caddisflies, and the jelly-like bryozoans. In total, 1377 species were identified.

Clinch River Mussel Recovery Efforts

by Mike Pinder

The Clinch River is recognized as one of the most biologically important aquatic systems in North America. Of particular importance is the high number of freshwater mussels. Over 45 mussel species are known from the Clinch River with several found nowhere else. The Clinch is also recognized as having the greatest number of endangered and imperiled mussel species in the United States. In an effort to recover freshwater mussels, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) during summer 2001 conducted its first release of hatchery-reared mussels in the Commonwealth. Over 2,250 juvenile (age 0) and 100 (age 3) mussels of both common and endangered species were released at a designated augmentation reach on the lower Clinch River, Scott County. Mussels were jointly propagated at the Virginia Tech Aquaculture Center, Blacksburg, and VDGIF's Aquatic Wildlife Conservation Center, Marion. Before releasing mussels at a site, a thorough survey was conducted to determine species presence, density, age class structure, and recruitment. The survey found 24 species and recruitment of several species. Along the same line, this year the department is assessing mussel populations at another augmentation site in the middle Clinch River, Russell County. The property owned by the Nature Conservancy contains 21 species including several federally endangered species. Survey work will begin in late June with augmentations to occur in early September.

Funding Available from the Southeastern Imperiled Fishes Team

by Wendy Smith

Three years ago, USFWS played an instrumental role in the development of a broad conservation coalition aimed at protecting aquatic resources in the southeastern United States, with a focus on freshwater fishes. World Wildlife Fund has since taken a leadership role in this effort. The coalition conservation group, now known as the Southeastern Imperiled Fishes Team (SIFT) includes representatives from an array of NGO's, state, federal and local agencies, and academic institutions. SIFT members have written a consensus-based action plan, called the Strategy for the Conservation and Recovery of Southeastern Imperiled Fishes, that provides direction and guidance for the group's efforts, including funding initiatives. SIFT's 2002 RFP is open until July 15. If you have proposals that address the goals and objectives of our group, please send them to NFWF as described in the RFP & corresponding application form by July 15th, 2002. No match is required to submit a proposal in this program. However, matches are encouraged, if possible, to maximize the money available. For

really compelling, community based projects we (WWF Southeast Rivers and Streams Project) may be able to provide some of the match money. Partnerships are also encouraged, so if you can get a partner who maybe has experience in what you are proposing or can generally help you, do it! For proposals that are sent in, get creative! Think of big bang ideas that could potentially help us publicize or sell this Strategy and translate into public interest, support, and increased funding for future projects under this Strategy. Under our 1st (2001) RFP, 4 proposals were awarded: 1) providing SIF pictures to the official NatureServe website, 2) developing captive propagation techniques and technology for the vermilion darter, 3) developing an SIF video library, and 4) enhancing the Tennessee River lake sturgeon release program. These proposals and all proposals submitted were a great start and great ideas for our 1st RFP! For our 2nd RFP, consider possible proposals for significant actions that will maybe bring a species closer to recovery - like reintroduction activities, reach many people - like education/outreach materials, provide significant information that is needed to manage or protect a species - like habitat requirements, protect a significant parcel of habitat important for a species, etc. Be creative, think on different scales.

Updates from Ecological Society of America on Two Bills in U.S. Congress

The following paragraphs are excerpts from the Science and Environmental Policy Update, a bi-weekly publication of the Ecological Society of America, for May 31, 2002.

Fisheries Law Renewal Passes Subcommittee, Amendments Shelved Until June - On May 23 the House Resources Fisheries Subcommittee approved Chairman Wayne Gilchrest's (R-MD) bill to reauthorize and amend the 1996 Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Subcommittee members agreed with their chairman's request to shelve amendments until the full committee takes up the bill. HR 4749 would renew the funding authorization for the law regulating commercial and recreational fishing in federally controlled ocean waters through fiscal 2007. Gilchrest said the bill aims to move the Magnuson Act "to the next step of conservation" including provisions to reduce overcapacity in fishing fleets, move forward with two pilot projects testing an ecosystem management approach, and reduce the effect of fishing on non-target species and habitat. Among the issues that were proposed as amendments, discussed and then withdrawn: 1) whether to make the National Marine Fisheries Service do more to analyze the cumulative social and economic effect of rules it proposes; 2) the way to identify the "best" scientific information available and whether to require that the data used to make agency decisions be peer-reviewed; 3) whether to close parts of the Middle Atlantic Bight (a region that extends from Montauk, NY to the Virginia-North Carolina border) to longline fishermen in an effort to stave off an Endangered Species Act listing of white marlin; 4) whether to set a firmer deadline for regional councils to develop guidelines

for reporting data on bycatch; 5) what to do about bottom-dragging fishing gear that can damage rock habitat; and 6) whether to change the procedure for adding members to the regional fishery councils.

Calvert to Examine Bill to Create Water Policy Panel - The House Resources Water and Power Subcommittee chaired by Representative Ken Calvert (R-CA), held a hearing May 22 on legislation to establish a commission to provide Congress with recommendations for a comprehensive national water policy. HR 3561 would establish the Twenty-First Century Water Policy Commission, which would have one year to make its recommendations to Congress. Introduced December 30 by Calvert and Georgia Republican Representatives John Linder and Nathan Deal, the bill would direct the commission to study all aspects of water management by federal, state, and local agencies and by private sector entities. The 17-member commission would be charged with developing a policy that would: 1) ensure an adequate and dependable supply of fresh water to meet the needs of the United States for the next 50 years; 2) consider all available technologies for increasing water supply efficiently, while maintaining environmental protection; and 3) recommend means of capturing excess water and flood water as a hedge against future droughts. The bill would direct that the recommendations not place increased mandates on state and local governments and that they suggest financing options for public works projects, including the implementation of user fees. Commission members would be appointed from federal agencies involved in water management, conservation or resource issues; state, local and tribal governments; and non-governmental organizations with an interest in water management, conservation or resource issues.