

# Fisheries at 50

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This year (i.e., 2025) we will publish the 50th volume of *Fisheries* which marks its 50th anniversary. This is an opportunity to both celebrate and reflect. From the moment that *Fisheries* was conceived and published its first issue in January of 1975, much has stayed the same while much has also changed.

To this day *Fisheries* is a blend of peer reviewed articles (usually of a synthetic nature) and member-oriented content focused on professional development, news items, correspondence from AFS leadership, committee reports, advertisements, obituaries, awards, and so on. I have heard folks often question whether *Fisheries* is a journal or a magazine and for me the answer is “both.” In fact, even how content is handled depends on whether it is peer-reviewed material (which is handled by various third-party science editors mostly from academia and government) or other content, such as news items that are handled by AFS staff (i.e., the Managing Editor is Peter Turcik). That healthy tension has existed from the early days and remains today. Yet, we are in good company in that other magazine-style journals such as *BioScience*, *The Wildlife Bulletin*, and *Hydro Review* continue to play important roles in our broader community.

*Fisheries* has certainly changed over the years. First and foremost, the look and feel of the magazine has evolved over time. Even in the early days, *Fisheries* included photographs and other imagery, but it was in black and white. Today, the journal is filled with lots of colorful content that begins with the high-quality photographs that adorn each issue of the journal. What we depict on the cover has certainly changed too. Early pictures sometimes showed unsafe fieldwork practices or what we now know to be less than ideal fish welfare images, whereas now, great effort is taken to ensure that images showcase exactly who we are. We also recognize that because in many ways *Fisheries* is the “flagship” communication platform, it is worth going the extra mile with the quality of graphs in research papers. To that end, we have recently recruited our first Figures Editor (Chris Guy). We have also recognized our collective interest in ensuring that AFS is an inclusive and accountable space and in that context we have recruited our first Community Advocacy Editor (Kaylyn Zipp).

Another major change is quite recent with the move towards reducing the number of hard copies that are distributed. Hard copies are more expensive to produce and mail and have a significant environmental footprint. Indeed, the default for members is now that they receive the online version, but they can opt in to the hard copy. I am someone that still values the paper copy so we have at least one issue we can have on the table where lab members eat their lunch. However, most of my trainees (the next generation!) are more than happy with the online version.

We could also muse about what *Fisheries* will look like in another 50 years... I suspect that the days of hard copies are numbered. With an eventual complete transition to an online format there are opportunities that emerge related to having more interactive content (e.g., embedded audio and video). There may also be opportunity to increase the number of peer reviewed articles which given recent trends in the submission of high-quality synthetic papers, would seem to be a necessary direction. Of course, the publishing landscape continues to evolve as does the digital media, social media, and computing worlds. Even professional societies themselves are evolving with an eye on being relevant to their members and society more broadly. Given that communicating information will continue to be central to our profession, I am confident that *Fisheries* will indeed be here to celebrate “*Fisheries* at 100,” although I suspect it will look very different than it does today! *Fisheries* has become a trusted and valued source of information with a diverse readership that spans the globe and extends well beyond our membership.

To help celebrate “*Fisheries* at 50,” we have selected five peer-reviewed papers published in *Fisheries* over the past 50 years that have had what our editorial team regards as “big impact.” Impact can of course be measured or articulated in many different ways, such as the number of citations, the extent to which it has informed policy or practice, or the extent to which it has become a foundational paper for trainees. What I can tell you is that the final list is not simply the top five most-cited papers, although all of the ones we selected do appear in the top 50 (from spot 1 to spot 47). We then invited authors to write an essay on their take on those five articles. In some cases, the initial authors are deceased, so we reached out to their contemporaries. These essays will appear in the December issue.

The team at *Fisheries* is at your service with ears open for ideas on what we can do to better serve you and our community. Many of the papers we handle on the peer reviewed side of *Fisheries* begin with an informal inquiry with our editorial team

to seek guidance on “fit.” Given that we have space for very few peer reviewed articles over the course of a year (usually three per issue so a max of 36 per year), our content is much more curated than at most other journals. We welcome ideas on content you would like to see us commission (e.g., invited papers)

or to send us ideas for papers you have in the works and think would be a good fit with *Fisheries*.

Thanks to everyone who has been part of our journey, including the contributors, photographers, editors, and readers that collectively have helped *Fisheries* become what it is today.

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American Fisheries Society

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