

COLUMN  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF'S STATEMENT

# Fisheries in Transition

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The year was 1994. I was in my first year of undergraduate studies at the University of Waterloo and was learning about the treasures hidden in academic libraries. For one course we were sent marching off to the library to practice searching for various topics (this was pre-Internet!). The stacks were overwhelming so I found myself in a reading area where librarians would display the latest issues of journals. Most journal covers at that time were awfully boring, but one stood out. A large photo of a fish was prominently displayed on the cover with the word “Fisheries” spanning the top. I immediately grabbed a copy and found a comfy couch to check it out. Soon I was in the stacks looking at back issues and racking up huge photocopy bills. Shortly thereafter I was getting a U.S. money order to mail to Bethesda, Maryland. I became an AFS member and have enjoyed receiving my monthly copy of *Fisheries* since then. As a student the format resonated with me—a perfect blend of goings on, opportunities, and science. I appreciated the visual elements (pictures!), the diversity of the content, and the synthetic nature of the work. It would be several years before I actually took a “fish course” so *Fisheries* (and other AFS journals) became a key resource in my learning journey.

Fast forward 29 years and I am exceedingly proud to assume the role of Editor-in-Chief for *Fisheries*. When the position was advertised it had a deadline 2 months out. I applied within 3 h of seeing the call! I was giddy at the prospects of taking on such a role and when I received communications that I was the one, it took a few days for the smile to fade. To say I am excited about *Fisheries* is an understatement. I love what it is today. And I am jazzed about what we can do with it to further amplify its value to AFS members and nonmembers alike. Fortunately, there have been many talented and dedicated editors before me. I wish to acknowledge and thank Gary Curtis for his service over the past few years. His leadership has left us in a great place from which we will continue to evolve and grow. I also want to acknowledge the two Chief Science Editors, Kristin Anstead and Michael Donaldson, the many Science Editors who handle papers, and the AFS support team led by Peter Turcik and Laura Hendee. I look forward to working with the entire *Fisheries* team.

The way I like to think about *Fisheries* is that there needs to be something in EVERY issue for EVERY reader. Indeed, that is one of the reasons why *Fisheries* embraces short articles. That allows us to squeeze in a handful of science papers to each issue rather than filling the pages with a single article that would presumably only be of interest to a component of our membership. Another hallmark of *Fisheries* is that the articles that are published span empirical pieces, case studies, syntheses, perspectives, and more. The empirical papers are carefully curated to ensure that they are on topics that would be of great interest to our readers. At times, we deflect perfectly good science to other AFS journals if they are too narrow in scope or inference.

As an author and previous Science Editor for *Fisheries*, I think I now have a pretty good idea of what a *Fisheries* paper “smells like” and they do tend to be a bit different than what you would usually read in the other AFS journals.

Over the next 6 months or so I intend to do lots of listening. I will also be digesting the recent AFS publication workshop report and consulting the *Fisheries* editorial team and the Publications Overview Committee. What, if anything, will change? It is too early to say. However, I do intend to focus much of my effort on recruitment of strategic content to ensure our readers are getting the more timely and relevant information that helps them as learners and fisheries professionals. What is unique about *Fisheries* is that even today, there are thousands of copies mailed out each month with these ending up on the desks of decisionmakers, practitioners, and politicians. Sure, you can consume content online, but that does take the effort of going to a site to engage with the material. Quite simply, you cannot hide from *Fisheries* when it arrives in your mailbox! And besides, does not everyone like mail?

If you have an idea for a paper or have a paper crafted already, you can always fire an email to me ([steven\\_cooke@carleton.ca](mailto:steven_cooke@carleton.ca)) and I will provide feedback to help you decide if *Fisheries* is the right fit for your work. I also welcome ideas about what you want to read about in *Fisheries* in the coming months and years. I will be shaking trees to help curate content and ensure that *Fisheries* continues to be a “must read” for those in our profession. I also commit to working carefully to ensure that *Fisheries* is a space that is inclusive and diverse, providing a venue for all members and other actors. In many ways *Fisheries* is a physical manifestation of the community of practice that AFS has fostered over the last 150+ years and I am honored to be able to contribute to our community as Editor-in-Chief for *Fisheries*.

**Steven J. Cooke** is a professor of environmental and interdisciplinary sciences at Carleton University in Ottawa. His work spans the natural and social sciences and involves studying freshwater and marine systems. Cooke has previously chaired the AFS Publications Overview Committee and held various editorial roles with environmental management and fisheries journals over the past two decades. He is Chair of KeepFishWet, the Sea Lamprey Research Board of the Great Lakes Fishery Commission, and the International Science Advisory Committee of Ocean Tracking Network. He is also the president of the new Society for Canadian Aquatic Sciences and secretary of the Collaboration for Environmental Evidence. Cooke is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, the American Fisheries Society, and the Explorers Club. Check out his research at [www.fecpl.ca](http://www.fecpl.ca) and follow him on Twitter at [@SJC\\_Fishy](https://twitter.com/SJC_Fishy).

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