



## 68th Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference BE THE CHANGE • MANAGE LOCALLY CONSERVE GLOBALLY

Madison, Wisconsin  
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### Career Opportunities and Student Events

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### General approach

We were guided by a set of goals and objectives for the event which are summarized below and were “mostly” achieved. See the next section for specific activities for students involved in the Midwest.

**Goal:** Activities should be focused on welcoming students, making them feel a part, and reflecting the Societys’ (Wisconsin’s) interest in their development as professionals. As such, the planning and activities should be welcoming, appropriate, and above all, practical. Financial issues should be of paramount consideration for the up-coming (but very poor) pre-professional. The experience should be valuable and not intimidating.

### **Objectives:**

- 1) Create a website presence for all student activities and concerns – make it prominent on the main webpage. (**Good presence on web – created a “Just 4 Students!” area and a FAQ section for first-time conference attendees**)
- 2) Set an attendance goal of 150 undergraduates (**exceeded – including grads, student attendance was roughly 300+**)
- 3) Reduce registration fees for students (\$75-100 max) (**\$95 for pre-registration, \$150 for late**)
- 4) Provide abundant student volunteer opportunities (AV, lights, registration, computer, etc.) – tie to reduction in registration fees? (\$10 reduction for every hour worked?) (**volunteers received \$8.00/hour of service – students got top priority for payment**)
- 5) Highlight student papers – make a list of grad/undergrad student papers – highlight in Program at a Glance (**did not accomplish this objective**)

## Specific activities

### **Beginning Your Professional Journey workshop**

**Organizers:** Rebecca Christoffel, Jim Schneider

**Time:** all day workshop, on Sunday, 9 Dec

**General description:** For the 3rd time, the Midwest hosted the “Beginning Your Professional Journey“ workshop. Designed primarily for undergraduates, the workshop was a series of talks, discussions, exercises, and panel discussions about how to transition from an undergraduate education into grad school or a job. The 4 sessions included: Resumes and Professional Correspondence, Academic and Employer Panels, Networking, and Interview Skills. Participants received binders full of resource materials for future use.

**Evaluation:** Student reaction to the workshop was overwhelmingly positive – the combination of solid practical advice and opportunities to engage actively in some of the material made it a highly valuable experience for students. Although the workshop was meant to be capped at 50 participants, due to confusion at registration, at one point more than 73 students had signed-up – many of which had to ultimately be turned away. Conference organizers for next year’s event should consider whether or not students that attend the workshop must also register for the conference. In the end, the conference committee decided that students should be allowed to attend the workshop without registering for the conference, but since the decision was made so late and the only way to register for the workshop was through the conference site, registration for the event stayed open longer than it should have and led to the over enrollment. The good thing is that there is clearly a continuing unmet need relative to a workshop like this one. The workshop was publicized well and widely which contributed to its ability to draw so many students.

**Budget:** Students were only charged \$20/student, and the rest of the event was paid for by the Midwest. Costs included travel and lodging for several of the speakers, copying fees for the binding material, snacks and lunch, plus office supplies. The final cost for the event will be added when all bills are in.

Subtracting the \$20 student fee meant the workshop was subsidized by the conference budget by approximately (will be added).

### **Janice Lee Fenske Memorial Award breakfast**

**Organizers:** Eric Anderson and Jessica Mistak

**Time:** Monday, December 10, 7:00-8:00 a.m

**General description:** The original idea was to hold a student organization leadership breakfast for TWS and AFS leaders to discuss issues, problems and successes of student chapters. However, Jessica Mistak of the Michigan DNR (and Michigan AFS) contacted the committee for help in organizing this award breakfast which recognized 25 outstanding students majoring in fisheries or wildlife management and selected 2 for \$500 scholarships. The award, given in honor Jan Fenske, a MDNR fisheries biologist, was awarded based on the

“characteristics that made Jan a remarkable fisheries biologist, including enthusiasm to protect fisheries and wildlife resources through management activities, selflessness and motivation to teach others, interest in professional involvement, and integrity, positive attitude, and compassion.” The attendance list for the breakfast was impressive including the director of the WDNR, (Matt Frank), the head of AFS, and approximately 20 other experienced and recognized wildlife and fisheries professionals from state and national agencies, non-profit organizations, and university faculty.

**Evaluation:** The breakfast was well received by students and by the professionals. It gave those selected students an opportunity to meet and closely network with many fish and wildlife leaders from around the region. Future consideration should be given to 2 issues: 1) can the scholarship grow to something larger than \$500/awardee? and, 2) awards for graduates and undergraduates should be separated since it is difficult for those just beginning their educational journey to compete with graduate students with years more experience than the undergrads.

**Budget:** The entire budget for the award breakfast was handled by the sponsors: The North Central Division, Wisconsin Chapter, and Michigan Chapter of the American Fisheries Society and the Wisconsin and Michigan chapters of The Wildlife Society.

### **Midwest Natural Resource Employment and Graduate Opportunities Fair**

**Organizers: Eric Anderson, Rebecca Christoffel and Jim Schneider**

**Time: Monday, Dec 10, 6:30 pm**

**General description:** The flyer for the event describes it best: “Come spend the evening visiting with representatives from state and federal natural resource agencies, private companies, non-profit/NGO, universities, and other natural resource-based employers and find out what’s available for summer employment, temp/permanent jobs, and graduate research opportunities in the fisheries and wildlife fields. There will be a short kick-off at 6:30 pm, followed by the chance to meet and talk with those individuals who are potentially hiring natural resource graduates, as well as with graduate programs that may be looking to fill research or teaching assistantships. Snacks and beverages will be served. So, bring a friend and find out what opportunities are out there and what it takes to get them! Don't forget to bring plenty of copies of your resume/CV to hand out.”

The venue for the evening was a spacious terrace with pizza and refreshments being served. Tables were set up along the walls with labels for the different organizations, universities, and companies, represented. Students were encouraged to go up and speak with representatives at the tables of what positions were available, how you apply, and what attributes and qualifications potential employers (or grad pros) were looking for. It also gave students the chance to ask the professionals, “How did you get your job?” Mentor tags were given to gregarious professionals who were willing to mix in with students around the room, answering their questions and attempting to set them at ease.

**Evaluation:** For a first attempt at a “job fair”, it went well. Although agency representation was light, there were a number of people from the Fish and Wildlife Service, Minn. DNR, U.S. Army Resource Division, and well as professional organizations (AFS and TWS) and universities (UM – Twin Cities, UW-Madison, Iowa State, SIU, etc.). Approximately 150 students showed up, many who stayed for the entire time. Pizza was served, and drew a lot of students in, but even after eating the lure of having so many professionals to interact with seemed to keep them around. In the future getting more agency personnel to commit to holding a table – and perhaps the idea of “speed dating” where students were forced to move from table to table every 10 minutes to prevent a student from monopolizing a particular individual. Definitely worth continuing and developing further!

**Budget:** The Conference Committee subsidized the event by providing pizzas and soft drinks. Approximately 30 pizzas were consumed with a total cost of **XXX**. Twenty pizzas probably would have been adequate.