USAS President’s Message

As this is my first message at USAS President I would like to thank the membership for their support in choosing me to lead the US Aquaculture Society and represent the society on the board of the World Aquaculture Society. I’d also like to thank those of you that were able to attend Aquaculture America 2009 in Seattle, WA and help make it a successful conference even give the current economic turmoil in the US. This says a lot about our society, the dedication of our membership and our industry in general.

In 2010 USAS will celebrate its 20th Anniversary!! USAS plans to recognize those with 10+ years membership. Chris Green has agreed to serve as the Program Chairman for the 2011 Aquaculture America Conference in New Orleans and Reg Blaylock has agreed to chair the Steering Committee. Thanks to both of you for volunteering to serve.

Our Publications committee chaired by Wade Watanabe continues to do an outstanding job. Wade and his committee, with the assistance of Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, recently published their third book since 2007 and Wade along with co-author Harry Daniels have a fourth book entitled “Practical Flatfish Culture and Stock Enhancement” due to be published later this year or in early 2010.

Ken Riley, our Student Liaison, is already making plans for the student activities for the WAS Triennial next year in San Diego, CA. Matt DiMaggio a doctoral student at the University of Florida, has agreed to serve as the 2010-2011 Student Liaison and will be assisting Ken with the plans for San Diego.

As the new President of USAS several of the goals I hope to accomplish during my term include the formation of a new committee to Promote and Educate the Public as to the Safety, Science and Sustainability of Aquaculture and Aquaculture Products. Frankly, I am really disturbed by the bad press aquaculture receives since most is either not science-based or simply based on bad science. I think it is time for the USAS (and others) to take a more proactive role in promoting/protecting our industry and what better way to do that than through education.

Along the same lines with the Board’s cooperation I would also like to see the formation of a new committee to Promote Aquaculture Education at the K-12 and undergraduate levels and USAS’s participation in the development of Standardized Aquaculture Teaching Curriculums for K-12. Dave Cline, an Aquaculture Extension Specialist at Auburn University, is currently working on his Ph.D. examining teacher priorities for aquaculture education topics and teacher confidence in teaching those subject areas with the goal of identifying teacher training needs and gaps in available teaching materials. Dave participated in our recent Board of Directors conference call and prior to the call provided the Board with a list of suggestions for how USAS can get involved in aquaculture education. Additionally, he provided a quote from the summary portion of the National Aquaculture Curriculum Phase II Evaluation Report submitted to the National Council for Agriculture Education/USDA that to me sums up why USAS should be on the forefront of this effort. The quote David provided (Conroy & Peasley, 1998, page 22) starts out saying “Aquaculture has, perhaps more than any other agriculture or academic content area, the potential for interdisciplinary and collaborative instruction.” The evaluation team then cited the survey data and said that it “indicates the opportunities are limitless and go beyond the traditional academic-vocational integration.” At a time when enrollment in college aquaculture programs is down nationwide, USAS’s participation would also provide an opportunity to introduce aquaculture to the next generation of aquaculturists.

I’d also like to take this opportunity to announce several “new” Student Awards. USAS in collaboration with the Fish Culture Section of the American Fisheries Society has established the “FCS/USAS Best Student Abstract Travel Award.” To be eligible you must be a member of both the AFS Fish Culture Section and USAS and be presenting at the conference. This is a $500 Award.

Another new award for 2010 is the “James Ebeling Undergraduate Student Travel Scholarship.” Dr. James Ebeling has generously donated $500 to fund conference travel for a deserving undergraduate who demonstrates in interest and potential to contribute to the field of US Aquaculture. The only eligibility requirement is that the student must be enrolled in a two- or four-year undergraduate degree program with an emphasis in aquaculture. The award also includes 1-year student membership in WAS and the US Chapter and a complimentary student registration to the conference. James challenges others to step forward to sponsor additional student travel grants. For more information of these and other Student Awards please contact Michael Schwarz via e-mail at mschwarz@vt.edu.

Finally, I’d like to thank immediate Past-President Rebecca Lochmann for her excellent leadership of the society during her recent term and look forward to continuing to work with her as she leads the Executive Board. Additionally, I’d like to welcome new board members Reg Blaylock and Gef Flemlin as well as express my appreciation for the continued dedication of those returning board members, committee chairs and committee members. LaDon Swan also deserves special thanks for his continuing effort to update USAS’s 5-Year Strategic Plan. LaDon has set an aggressive timeline to have

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Promotion and Membership Committee

This committee has been making constant efforts to attract members from various parts of the world to make the World Aquaculture Society (WAS) a truly global organization. The membership fee is one of the major hurdles for the developing country individuals to join the society. Even if the individuals are willing to pay the fee, there have been difficulties involved in making payments through a bank. WAS has been examining ways to mitigate such problems and attract more members.

New measures introduced

To avoid problems involved with annual renewal, a five-year membership has been introduced with a 10 percent discount. A good number of people have taken up membership under this category. In order to help the developing country individuals, e-membership has also been introduced. However, the growth of membership under this category has been slow. There are still several communication issues, but with the improvement in the internet service, this category of membership is expected to grow.

The WAS board has also approved the provision of a maximum of six complimentary memberships to the deserving applicants from the developing countries. This membership, once secured, can be renewed up to five years. The Rhode Island University Sea Grant Program in the United States and the Institute of Aquaculture in the United Kingdom have also provided some complimentary membership. The winners of these memberships have been assisting WAS in promoting WAS activities in their area.

China

China, the world’s largest aquaculture producer, hosted the 2002 World Aquaculture Conference in Beijing. The China Society of Fisheries is an affiliate of WAS. Membership from China is small at present and the committee has placed a special emphasis on increasing membership and enhancing the role of WAS in Chinese aquaculture activities. WAS power point presentations and the WAS poster have already been translated into Chinese. Several presentations were also organized in the leading Chinese aquaculture institutions by the two of our committee members, Dr. Junda Lin and Dr. Donghuo Jiang. These individuals recognize that awareness about the society is poor and strong publicity is needed to attract more members from China.

Power point and poster on WAS

The WAS poster and the power point presentation have been translated into various languages and uploaded on the website (www.was.org). Anyone wanting to translate the materials into other languages should contact the WAS Home Office.

Fellow of World Aquaculture Society

The Board of the World Aquaculture Society has proposed establishing a World Aquaculture Society Fellows (WASF) Program to honor outstanding WAS members for their achievements in aquaculture. Fellows will be individuals “who have made outstanding achievements in aquaculture science, industry, outreach or extension as recognized by their peers.” A WASF program will bring a greater level of respectability to WAS since Fellows will provide additional leadership for the Society, and will serve as ambassadors involved closely with the Society’s growth and development. WAS Fellows will serve as distinguished colleagues to whom the WAS and its members can look for guidance as global aquaculture evolves.

Criteria for nomination and selection have been developed based on the suggestions provided by members. The final proposal will be discussed and finalized during World Aquaculture 2009 in Veracruz, Mexico.

Promotion of membership in Africa

The committee made a special effort to organize sessions related to Africa during WAS 2008. An email group has also been established to connect those interested in establishing an African chapter of the WAS. The membership was promoted during the PAFFA (Pan-African Fish and Fisheries Association) conference held in Ethiopia and in the 8th International Symposium on Tilapia in Aquaculture (ISTA) held Egypt during 2008. Dr. Bill Daniels and Dr. Imad Saoud represented WAS in PAFFA and were instrumental in recruiting a large number of members. Dr. Imad Saoud also assisted in the ISTA conference to promote WAS. As a result of these efforts, there are now 70 members from different African countries.

As in other countries, payment of dues is the major challenge to increasing membership in Africa. There is not only the difficulty of money transfer, but many countries also require payment of transaction fees.

M.C. Nandeesha and Junda Lin
Co-Chairs
Dr. Barry Costa Pierce, Hoang Tung, Donghuo Jiang and Graham Mair, Members