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History of the Southeastern Fishes Council, 1975-1993

HISTORY OF THE SOUTHEASTERN FISHES COUNCIL, 1975-1993

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PREFACE

This document provides a history of the Southeastern Fishes Council from the time of its inception in 1975 to the present. The major impetus for compiling this history is to enable our membership to look back and reflect on the activities and accomplishments of the Council. In doing this, we can compare our activities and accomplishments with the purpose and objectives mandated by our constitution and bylaws. Hopefully, this history will stimulate us to think about what we have done well and what we possibly have not done so well. Then, playing on our strengths, we can set our goals and plan for the future with great expectations.

This history was compiled from numerous sources including the original corporate charter, constitution and bylaws, letters, memos, bank statements, ledgers, *Southeastern Fishes Council Proceedings*, and mailing lists found in the Council archives in the possession of the Historian and files in the possession of the Secretary-Treasurer. A particular debt of gratitude is owed to Werner Wieland and Hank Bart for help in compiling information from the Secretary-Treasurers' files. In addition, the sound memories of some long-standing members were indispensable in gathering some previously unrecorded information. Special thanks in this regard go to Herb Boschung, Bob Cashner, Dave Etnier, Carter Gilbert, and Buck Snelson.

INTRODUCTION

The Southeastern Fishes Council (SFC) was the brainchild of Dr. Royal Suttkus. Prior to forming the SFC, Dr. Suttkus had tried unsuccessfully to form a "National Plan for Freshwater Ichthyology." After this unsuccessful attempt at forming a national fish conservation organization, he reasoned that a regional group, similar to the Desert Fishes Council, could succeed in the Southeast.

An organizational meeting was held at Williamsburg, Virginia, on 11 June 1975, with 26 persons in attendance. Shortly thereafter, on 8 July 1975, the SFC was officially chartered as a not for profit corporation at Knoxville, Tennessee. The incorporator was Joseph P. Congleton, a young lawyer acquaintance of Dave Etnier. Correspondence in the archives and minutes of the organizational meeting show that Herb Boschung, Dave Etnier, Wayne Starnes, Royal Suttkus, and Bill Yambert were instrumental in forming the corporation. The constitution and bylaws, patterned after those of the Desert Fishes Council, were drawn up by Dave

Etnier and Wayne Starnes. The SFC had 65 charter members (Table 1).

Table 1. Charter members of the Southeastern Fishes Council.

Anderson, William D., Jr.	Howell, Mike W.
Barkuloo, James M	Jandebeur, Thomas S.
Bauer, Bruce H.	Jenkins, Robert E.
Beadles, John K.H	Jordan, Ralph, Jr.
Bennett, James A.	Kuehne, Robert A.
Binderim, Gary E.	Loesch, Harold.
Bortone, Stephen	Marion, Ken
Boschung, Herbert T.	Menzel, Bruce W.
Bouchard, Raymond W.	Mettee, Maurice F.
Briggs, John C.	Miller, Robert R.
Buth, Donald G.	Mundy, Phillip R.
Cashner, Robert C	Nester, Robert D.
Clemmer, Glenn H.	Nunziata, C.A.
Cokendolpher, James	Palmer, William M.
Collard, S. B.	Ramsey, John S.
Conner, John V.	Relyea, Kenneth
Cooper, John Edward	Rickett, John D.
Crittenden, Edward	Robinson, Henry W.
Dean, David M.	Scott, Donald C.
deSylva, Donald P.	Seehorn, Monte C.
Douglas, Michael E.	Shipp, Robert L.
Douglas, Neil H.	Snelson, Franklin F., Jr.
Etnier, David A.	Starnes, Wayne C.
Felley, James	Stauffer, Jay R.
Freeman, Harry W.	Stiles, Robert A.
Fuller, Samuel L.H.	Stober, Richard C.
Gilbert, Carter R.	Suttkus, Royal D.
Gunning, Gerald E.	Swift, Camm C.
Harima, Hector	Thompson, Bruce A.
Hastings, Philip A.	Timmons, Tom J.
Heins, David C.	Walker, William H.
Hocutt, Charles H.	Williams, James D.
	Yerger, Ralph W.

OFFICERS

In accordance with the bylaws, officers of the SFC serve for approximately two years. Nine of the most reputable ichthyologists in the southeastern United States have served as

chairman (Table 2).

Perhaps the most demanding position in the SFC is that of Secretary-Treasurer. Eight members have sacrificed their time and energy in this position (Table 2).

MEMBERSHIP

Based on incomplete records, the number of members in the SFC has grown from 65 to 198 during its 18 years of existence (Table 2). The membership has consistently comprised the most knowledgeable and talented ichthyologists in the southeastern United States. The SFC has two life members- H. T. Boschung and R. D. Suttkus. The knowledge and experience of the membership is undoubtedly our most important resource with which to address the issues concerning the preservation of southeastern fishes.

ACTIVITIES

The most notable activities of the SFC have been the annual meetings, publication of the *Southeastern Fishes Council Proceedings*, manufacture of fish buttons (Table 2), and political activism concerning rare fishes and their habitats.

Annual meetings have been held at different locations each year throughout the Southeast (Table 2). They provide an important opportunity for on-the-spot, in-depth exchange and discussion of information and ideas concerning preservation of southeastern fishes. They also allow the membership a forum for open discussion of SFC administrative business.

The SFC has published 26 issues of the *Southeastern Fishes Council Proceedings* (Table 2). In addition to providing information on the various individual activities of the membership, the *Proceedings* has been an important outlet for several fish faunal surveys, life history and ecology studies, and status reports for numerous rare fishes.

Nine different fish buttons have been distributed by the SFC (Table 2). These buttons raise some funds, stimulate interest by commemorating meetings, and provide enjoyable memorabilia for the members.

Perhaps the most important activity of the SFC has been the use of our extensive technical knowledge of fishes in political activism. Two of the hottest topics of political activism involving SFC members occurred early in the history of the Council. Several SFC members made depositions or presentations in court cases and public hearings against the Tellico Dam and Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway projects in 1976. Battles against these projects raged through the 70's and into the early 80's, but both projects were finally completed. The snail darter appears to be hanging on in the wake of the Tellico project. Although impacts of the Tenn-Tom project have been addressed by Herb Boschung in SFC *Proceedings* No. 19, only time will tell what the full impact will be. For example, there is concern that the gene pool of a unique walleye population in the upper Tombigbee System will be swamped by walleye from the Tennessee System (see

Proceedings No. 22).

Also in 1976, Bob Jenkins appeared at a Salem, Virginia, city council meeting in an attempt to protect the South Fork Roanoke system from a dam. In addition, the SFC contested a proposed dam on the Savannah River (Richard B. Russell). Richard B. Russell was completed in 1984, and has proved to be somewhat of a boondoggle, complete with an expensive oxygen-injected aeration system for striped bass.

In 1978, the Council sent a letter to President Carter supporting Carter's review and re-evaluation of federally funded water projects. Also, members of SFC were encouraged to present their views concerning status of the Cahaba shiner to the Fish and Wildlife Service. The SFC unanimously supported a resolution opposing the Columbia Dam on the Duck River, Tennessee. Letters were sent to the directors of all game and fish agencies in the Southeast, recommending that they intensively review projects involving introductions of non-native fishes, especially grass carp.

As the Tellico and Tenn-Tom projects continued to grind on in 1979, the SFC approached CBS's "60 Minutes" to cover the Tenn-Tom, but CBS "shied away." Letters were sent to President Carter urging him to veto the Tellico project, and to TVA Chairman David Freeman, complimenting him for his open-minded posture regarding dams and other projects.

In 1980, SFC members were encouraged to write senators and congressmen urging opposition to destructive environmental projects on the basis of economics, because it was becoming obvious that endangered and threatened species are not very important to most politicians. This encouragement was spurred on as a result of the 1980 election where relatively environmentally-conscious Jimmy Carter was defeated by economically-conservative and environmentally-unconscious Ronald Reagan.

SFC members were polled at the 1984 annual meeting about localities worthy of purchase by the Nature Conservancy. The Conasauga River was the consensus top choice passed on to the Nature Conservancy, but members were encouraged to "go to bat" for other sites as well.

At the 1989 meeting, the membership unanimously recommended that a letter regarding concerns about effects of effluent from drilling for coal bed methane in the Cahaba basin be sent to the Alabama Department of Environmental Management. In spite of the letter being sent in 1990 by President Buck Snelson, a permit for the project was subsequently issued. Also in 1989, Chairman Bob Jenkins sent a letter to T.F.H. Publications warning aquarium enthusiasts not to release the red shiner outside its native range.

In 1992, the SFC drafted several resolutions in an effort to protect southeastern fishes. These included resolutions opposing increased siltation caused by the chip mill industry in the Mobile, Tennessee, and Cumberland basins; opposing location of a landfill draining into Mill Creek (Conasauga basin); opposing location of a landfill draining into the Etowah River in Forsyth County, Georgia; urging the Corps of Engineers not to proceed with plans to impound the Pea River

Table 2. Administration and activities of the Southeastern Fishes Council, 1975-1992.

Year	Chairman	Chairman-elect	Sec. Treas.	No. members	Total assets	Meeting place/organization	SFC Proceedings & Editor	Buttons
1975	R.D. Suttkus	D.A. Etnier	H.T. Boschung	65		Williamsburg, VA/ASIH		
1976	R.D. Suttkus	D.A. Etnier	H.T. Boschung	106	\$780.76	New Orleans, LA/ASB	1(1), 1(2), 1(3) H.T. Boschung	
1977	D.A. Etnier	H.T. Boschung	F.F. Snelson	82	\$920.71	Gainesville, FL/ASIH	1(4), 2(1) G.H. Clemmer	
1978	D.A. Etnier	H.T. Boschung	F.F. Snelson		\$1,141.14	Tuscaloosa, AL/ASB	2(2) G.H. Clemmer	
1979	H.T. Boschung	H.T. Boschung	R.C. Cashner	167	\$1,921.90	Chatanooga, TN/ASB	2(3), 2(4), G.H. Clemmer	
1980	H.T. Boschung	G.H. Clemmer	R.C. Cashner			Tampa, FL/ASB	3(1), 3(2) C.R. Gilbert	Frecklebelly madtom
1981	G.H. Clemmer	C.R. Gilbert	W.C. Starnes			Knoxville, TN/ASB	3(3) C.R. Gilbert	Cypress darter
1982	G.H. Clemmer	C.R. Gilbert	W.C. Starnes			Richmond, KY/ASB	3(4), 4(1) C.R. Gilbert	Bluenose shiner
1983	C.R. Gilbert	R.C. Cashner	G.H. Burgess			Tallahassee, FL/ASB	4(2) C.R. Gilbert	Barrens topminnow
1984	C.R. Gilbert	R.C. Cashner	G.H. Burgess			Memphis, TN/ASB	4(3) C.R. Gilbert	Maryland darter
1985	R.C. Cashner	R.E. Jenkins	B.A. Thompson			Knoxville, NC/ASIH		
1986	R.C. Cashner	R.E. Jenkins	B.A. Thompson			Columbia, SC/ASB	4(4) C.R. Gilbert	Spring pygmy sunfish
1987	R.E. Jenkins	F.F. Snelson	W. Wieland	192		Athens, GA/ASB	No. 17 M.M. Stevenson	Rustyside sucker
1988	R.E. Jenkins	F.F. Snelson	W. Wieland		\$2,732.29	Biloxi, MS/ASB	No. 18 M.M. Stevenson	
1989	F.F. Snelson	B.H. Bauer	W. Wieland		\$3,202.55	Charlotte, NC/ASB	Nos. 19, 20 M.M. Stevenson	
1990	F.F. Snelson	B.H. Bauer	W. Wieland		\$4,244.34	Charleston, SC/ASIH	Nos. 21, 22 M.M. Stevenson	Cape Fear shiner
1991	B.H. Bauer	D.C. Heins	H.L. Bart, Jr.			Boone, NC/ASB	Nos. 23, 24 M.M. Stevenson	
1992	B.H. Bauer	D.C. Heins	H.L. Bart, Jr.	198	\$4,237.54	Tuscaloosa, AL/ASB	Nos. 25, 26 M.M. Stevenson	Pygmy sculpin
1993	D.C. Heins	S.J. Walsh	H.L. Bart, Jr.	196	\$4,541.20	Virginia Beach, VA/ASB	Nos. 27, 28 M.M. Stevenson	

at Arifton, Alabama; and urging the Alabama Department of Environmental Management and the State of Alabama to establish regulations for the Cahaba River and other outstanding Alabama waters to prevent further lowering and begin restoration of water quality. The Cahaba River resolution was the only one acted upon by the Council.

Besides these official political activities, many SFC members have conducted individual efforts to preserve southeastern fishes. Members have made important and numerous comments on many rare fishes for the Fish and Wildlife Service to help determine threatened or endangered status. In addition, several members in Tennessee have been actively involved in re-establishing the spotfin chub, Smoky madtom, yellowfin madtom, and *Elassoma* sp. into native waters during recent years.

In 1988, Steve Platania of the Desert Fishes Council encouraged SFC members to establish a systematic 4th of July fish count similar to the Christmas bird count. The fish count idea was further discussed at the 1989 meeting. The consensus was that if anyone wished to do such a count, they could pick their own time and method. Steve Ross stated that he had been conducting a "count" since 1975. It is interesting that 1976 SFC Chairman Royal Sutkus called upon each member to establish a regular monitoring program at a local collecting site to determine long term trends in habitat and status of fishes, especially for streams with rich assemblages or unique endemics. Such monitoring is in accordance with Objective 5 of the constitution, which states, "To encourage members to assume responsibility of monitoring one or more local fish populations and their habitats and present report thereon at annual meetings."

One of the low points in the history of the SFC came in 1989 when we were informed that the Council did not have official tax exempt status. This apparent shortcoming was in direct violation of Article VII of the constitution which states "The affairs of the Council shall at all times be managed in such a way as to preserve and safeguard its tax-exempt status. This apparent problem started in 1978 when the Council's corporate charter was sold to a Knox County, Tennessee, restaurant who needed a non-profit charter at least two years old to acquire a liquor license. The restaurant's lawyers offered to pay fees for establishing a new SFC with the same name, officers, constitution, by-laws, and tax-exempt status, and to contribute \$1,000 to the new council. The new SFC was supposedly rechartered under the same name on a second charter, but no charter could be found. Although the Council had a Taxpayer Identification Number on its Paine Webber account when the tax problem arose in 1989, the origin of the number was in question. In addition, there were no records of the SFC ever filing for or receiving recognition of exemption under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. In 1991, a certified public accountant advised the SFC to file a return and pay approximately \$300 in back taxes and then file for official tax exempt status with the IRS.

Fortunately, it appears that through the efforts of Secretary-Treasurers Werner Wieland and Hank Bart, this mess is being straightened out. Werner determined that the

Council had indeed received a Taxpayer Identification Number through the Memphis IRS office sometime after May 1981 that matches SFC reports (W-9 Form) of dividends paid by Paine Webber. After consultation with Certified Public Accountant R. Allen Whiteside and the IRS, it appears that the SFC has been in compliance with IRS regulations because the annual income has been less than \$5,000 (see *Southeastern Fishes Council Proceedings* Nos. 23 & 25 for details). However, it appears that members are not able to deduct contributions to the organization under its present status. Secretary Bart is now working on the paperwork to make the SFC tax exempt under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code.

SUMMARY

The major activities of the SFC have been in accordance with the first two purposes outlined in Article II, Section 1 of the constitution, "(A) To provide for the pursuit and transmittal of information on the status and protection of southeastern fishes and their habitats; (B) to promote the perpetuation of rich natural assemblages of fishes and their habitats as well as the localized unique forms and their habitats..." For 18 years, members of the SFC have expended a commendable amount of effort trying to accomplish these purposes. The SFC's environmental expertise and hard work have been its major strengths.

In spite of all this scientifically sound expertise, hard work, and backing of the Endangered Species Act, it appears that in the political arena, the SFC has lost more battles than it has won. Our major weakness appears to be that we have not learned to push the correct political "hot button"-economics, early enough, hard enough, or long enough. If we wish to become more successful, we must become more savvy with the use of economic issues. Perhaps we should get expert environmental economists involved. We must find quick ways to muster massive public support with economic as well as environmental issues. Getting major TV magazine shows such as "60 minutes" and Cable News Network's "Earth Matters" involved is a good idea that should be tried again when the situation warrants it. And the earlier we get involved in a project, the better. We sometimes get involved relatively late, and politicians are reluctant to stop the ball once it is rolling. We must attempt to stop environmentally damaging projects while they are being considered by Congress, or while private industry proposals are still under regulatory and public review, rather than wait until the bulldozers are rolling. Perhaps SFC needs to form a congressional watchdog committee and maintain regular contact with state regulatory agencies to get an early start on reviewing projects.

With increased population, development and habitat destruction will continue. It has been estimated that over 40% of worldwide net terrestrial primary production is used by humans. This disproportionate use by one species leaves 60% of the net primary production for the remaining 30 (10-100)