

Cal-Neva Outstanding Large Chapter Award Nomination Statement for 2019

As current President, I am truly honored to nominate the California-Nevada Chapter of the American Fisheries Society (AFS/Society) for the 2020 AFS Outstanding Large Chapter Award. The Cal-Neva Chapter had an extraordinary year in 2019, not the least of which was due to its role in the planning, organization, and implementation of the 2019 joint annual meeting between AFS and The Wildlife Society (TWS) in Reno, Nevada, September 29 – October 3, 2019. The Chapter rallied its forces to staff nearly 70% of the primary planning committee posts, working closely with both Society and partners in Western Division to put on an historic meeting comprising the greatest assemblage of fish and wildlife professionals and students ever. This meeting occurred in lieu of the Chapter's normal general annual meeting and required more than 18 months of intensive involvement by the Chapter. This effort, which included dozens of Cal-Neva member volunteers, contributed significantly to the remarkable success of the meeting, resulting in over 2,100 AFS meeting attendees and revenues totaling nearly \$1.2 million. Revenue goals for the Chapter (\$50,000), Western Division (\$40,000), and Society (\$550,000) were all met, plus there is another \$105,000 of profit that has recently been shared, reflecting the outstanding effort of the Chapter in concert with partners in hosting an exceptional scientific forum that was also highly profitable for all levels of the organization. Last year was also a remarkable year for the Cal-Neva Chapter in terms of member recruitment. At the time of the August 31, 2019 census for membership, the Cal-Neva Chapter was the largest chapter in AFS (Eva Przygodzki, AFS, pers. comm.) with 511 members. The 20% or so increase in membership from 2018 was in part the result of a concerted effort made by California State agency members in Cal-Neva Chapter leadership to both recruit and reactivate members, and to pave a pathway for their attendance and participation in the Reno meeting. Cal-Neva leaders worked with agency heads at the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) and Department of Water Resources to promote the benefits of having their scientists attend the joint annual meeting in Reno. This effort was especially successful with CDFW and facilitated out-of-state travel and funding approvals for a major delegation of both new, reactivated, and existing Cal-Neva members. While Cal-Neva Chapter engagement during 2019 was clearly dominated by efforts associated with the Reno meeting, the Chapter was also very active conducting normal business with respect to serving its membership and promoting the mission of AFS. In-line with AFS Strategic Plan objective 4 and with Past-President Steve Brumbaugh's 2019 work plan, Cal-Neva Chapter dissolved its International Committee and replaced it with a new Diversity and Outreach Committee, which hosted its first social mixer in September 2019. The Chapter supports three, very active student subunits – Sacramento-Davis, Santa Cruz-Monterey Bay Area, and Humboldt State University – which continued their work in 2019 to recruit new student members and to take the AFS mission to the public at a grassroots level. The Santa Cruz-Monterey Bay Area subunit has an exceptional track record of having been awarded Outstanding Student Subunit by Western Division three years running (2017-2019), and by Society in 2018 and 2019. Additionally, Emily Chen, a doctoral candidate at University of California, Berkeley and a Cal-Neva student member, assumed the Western Division student representative position in 2019. Emily was instrumental in organizing the Western Division student colloquium that was held at Humboldt State University in November 2019. Finally, no sooner were Cal-Neva's tracks cool from the Reno meeting did the Chapter embark on planning for its 2020 annual meeting, which was to be held in conjunction with a consortium of State and federal agencies that share key strategic goals for fisheries conservation, sustainability, and the advancement of science for evidenced-based decision making. In closing, the prodigious accomplishments of Cal-Neva Chapter in 2019, as highlighted above and elsewhere in this application, speak to the deservedness of the Chapter for Outstanding Unit Award.

Prepared by 2019 Cal-Neva Chapter President Rob Titus