

January 21, 2015

**North Carolina Chapter of the American Fisheries Society**

**Executive Committee (EXCOM)**

Ms. Brena Jones, President

Ms. Kim Sparks, President-Elect

Dr. Greg Cope, Past President

Mr. Todd Ewing, Secretary-Treasurer

**SUBJECT: NC AFS CHAPTER JERRY R. FINKE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE NOMINATION**

Dear NC AFS EXCOM:

We respectfully nominate the following NC AFS member, Bryn Tracy, for recognition as the Chapter’s Jerry R. Finke Distinguished Service Award winner for 2015. Bryn has embodied scientific dedication throughout his long professional career and serves as a fantastic model for upcoming fishery scientists to emulate. A stalwart naturalist and fish biologist, Bryn has continually taken it upon their person to inform and raise the general level of knowledge of chapter members, the scientific community, the lay public, and State staff.

While Bryn is an active fish biologist both on and off the job, he is first and foremost, a stalwart supporter of the NC AFS Newsletter. He routinely keeps the Chapter apprised of all of NCDWQ/NCDWR’s findings regarding stream fish surveys, fish tissue contaminants, and statewide fish kills. It is conservatively estimated that in the past 10 years, he has contributed 39 articles and 137 pages of material. He has single-handedly spearheaded an effort to edit and post information on the NCWRC’s Scientific Council of Fishes rare and threatened fish species, thus educating the membership, and increasing everyone’s awareness about the state’s RTE species. Now, as a member of the NCAFS Newsletter Committee, he also helps to edit and polish each newsletter.

Bryn has relentlessly served as a judge of presentations at our Annual Chapter Meetings; typically judging student papers as he is a regular professional presenter. In fact, he won the 2013 W. Don Baker Memorial Best Professional Award for his paper entitled “Removing a Stream from the 303(d) List – The Richland Creek Fish Re-introduction Project”. His assistance to the planning and implementation of the 2014 NC AFS Meeting in Durham was invaluable and extensive. He has served as a member of our Environmental Concerns Committee.

Bryn has been a key partner in bringing some of western North Carolina’s streams and rivers back from neglected industrial dumping grounds devoid of their native fauna, to vibrant, healthy ecosystems that support a host of species.  Bryn has lead the effort to restore native fish to Richland Creek, a clear mountain trout stream that for decades suffered degrading effects from industrial discharges and urban stormwater.  Over the last decade, discharges to Richland Creek ceased and restoration efforts including retro fit stormwater controls, riparian plantings, streambank stabilization, and education have led to much improved water quality.  Though the stream improved, native fish that occupied Richland Creek before decades of pollution were unable to return due to the Lake Junaluska Dam acting as a barrier.  Bryn proposed, and with the help of partners, implemented a project to reintroduce native darters, cyprinids, sculpin and other species to areas upstream of the dam.  The project was modeled after NCWRC’s Pigeon River Fish reintroduction, in which Bryn was also a key partner and contributor.  After four years of spring and fall reintroduction work, surveys show that all of the species moved are once again thriving and reproducing in their native home.

Bryn also does a great job conducting IBI assessments in North Carolina’s rivers and streams.  Getting the job done requires a team of at least four people, two shockers and two netters.  NCDWR staff and volunteers from all over the state anxiously await an email from Bryn telling them to pack their waders and get ready for some good ole stream shocking.  Having so many folks ready to put their everyday work aside to get out in the field and help is a testament to Bryn’s positive attitude, leadership skills, and overall nice guy demeanor.

Bryn attends nearly all the Student Fisheries Subunit meetings and is an avid supporter of the group.  He comes early to visit, and really enjoys interacting with the students.  He often helps with the clean-up days on Rocky Branch (the creek adopted by SFS that courses through NC State) and occasionally brings a backpack shocker so the group can monitor fish populations.  He is always ready and willing to share his expertise and field opportunities with the group.  Last year several members went with Bryn for a BioBlitz at Lake Waccamaw and had a ball while learning a lot.  On occasion he has invited the group to social events (one time he invited everyone to one of the NC State women's basketball games and made a donation to SFS for everyone who came).  He says it energizes him, but it is readily apparent that the students benefit greatly as well.  Just having him commit that kind of time to be with them is very affirming.  He asks the students what they are up to and is generally interested in what they are doing.  He is a GREAT example for our young (and old) fisheries professionals!

In his spare time and on his own dollar, he has researched the Type Localities of all fishes ever described from NC, making an effort to determine if those species still reside at the original location. This work has led to numerous interesting field trips, presentations, and an upcoming manuscript. Also on his own time, Bryn has provided his knowledge and expertise in helping the North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences (NCSM) with multiple projects. From vital field assistance with Bridle Shiner and Carolina Redhorse inventories to identification of specimens within various donated collections (NCWRC, USGS, Western Carolina, Duke University, Stockton State, and NC State, UNC Institute of Marine Sciences, and various personal collections). He has also taken the lead and co-authored numerous publications and presentations with NCSM employees. His assistance is invaluable and NCSM considers him an honorary member of the Fishes Unit.

Bryn's contributions extend far across the Southeast as he is a member of the Southeastern Fishes Council (a collaboration of ichthyologists from across the SE). He compiles the North Carolina report, providing insightful papers and posters on fishes of the Carolinas and especially important notes on historical collections.

With the Southeastern Fishes Council, Bryn encourages students by carefully and meticulously judging student presentations and student posters. In 2014, Bryn organized and presented the best student paper and poster awards for the Southeastern Fishes Council annual meeting held in Asheville.  Bryn does not volunteer to judge a single session; rather he always judges every session, every paper, in every year.  Bryn's notes to the student participants are encouraging and instructive, offering clear critiques for improvement.

We are fortunate to have a person like Bryn who so genuinely cares about the people he interacts with, and who is so excited about North Carolina’s fishes and the preservation of the habitats they live in.  We, the undersigned, feel that Bryn is an excellent nominee for the Chapter’s 2015 JERRY R. FINKE DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD.