

Cultural Diversity: Leading the Way to Sustainable Fisheries.

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With the growing human population there are great threats to the integrity and sustainability of the world's aquatic ecosystems and fisheries resources, including localized effects of overfishing and land and waterscape changes and the more regional and global impacts of climate change.

Fisheries professionals thus face a daunting task of managing the inter-connected components of the ecological, social, and economic landscapes of aquatic ecosystems in order to produce optimal benefits for society while maintaining sustainable fish populations at local and global levels of governance. To be effective, today's fisheries professionals must be skilled communicators who appreciate the diverse capabilities of fisheries organizations, allied industries, and stakeholders. They must also have a comprehensive knowledge of fisheries systems and understanding of how these fisheries can co-exist with society's values and needs. The breadth and depth of our enterprise requires a trans-disciplinary leadership approach where teamwork and professionalism are essential for the development and implementation of effective management programs. The success of these programs will further depend on our abilities to include an increasing diversity of stakeholders within our decision-making process, necessitating better communication skills between and among our managers, researchers, administrators, government officials and the public. These deliberations will require that we demonstrate that our decisions are based on science that can qualitatively and quantitatively determine the impacts of environmental perturbations, as well as demonstrate that the responsiveness of our management activities will produce the desired outcome. To achieve this goal, we must enhance our understanding of fisheries ecosystems, and strengthen the needed infrastructure and analytical tools that will allow us to predict the outcomes of our actions with greater precision and assist in setting the all public's expectations within the realm of achievable goals. As shown by case studies, such enhancements will ultimately contribute to increasing our credibility with the large diversity of fisheries stakeholders as well as augment the broad public support needed for our profession as stewards of our fish and aquatic resources.