



# IFC Newsletter

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## A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

### MAKING HISTORY

Welcome to the Instream Flow Council! It almost seems too easy or perhaps anticlimactic to usher in the organization with only six words considering all the hard work, personal sacrifice and true inspiration of so many people over the past four years or so. Nevertheless, it is incredible to have progressed from a simple idea to a full fledged international organization in such a relatively short period. All those who have played a part in this evolution certainly deserve recognition and a sincere thank-you. I'm sure I'll leave some folks out, and I apologize to those who I slight, but I thought I'd use my space in the first newsletter of the Instream Flow Council to acknowledge some of these important people and their accomplishments.

The English philosopher and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead made the keen observation many years ago that "ideas won't keep - something must be done about them." It seems Alfred's outlook on life was pretty similar to Christopher Estes who realized the need for state fish and wildlife agency instream flow specialists to network and determined something must be done about it. There was good reason for Christopher to have the idea.

The past 30 years or so have seen significant advances in instream flow needs assessment methods. Some states have full time staff and funding specifically for administering instream flow programs. And many states have developed legislative means of protecting aquatic resources. But the rush to acquire a better understanding of instream flow needs and administer effective

instream flow programs, in combination with the usual turf guarding and political manipulations, often placed state and provincial instream flow biologists at odds with other natural resource management agencies, traditional water user groups and sometimes even within their own agencies.

Making the leap from idea to reality, though was a daunting hurdle that would have stopped someone of lesser conviction. Christopher's solution was simply to put together a team of state and federal biologists and secure a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Federal Aid to conduct the National Instream Flow Program Assessment (NIFPA). The steering committee was made up of state biologists Gary Smith (CA), Jay Skinner (CO), Chuck Coomer (GA), Del Lobb (MO), Lister Spence (MT), and Doug Sheppard (NY). Federal biologists included co-chair Keith Bayha, Dawn Whitehead, Alex Hoar and Clair Salnaker. This group planned and conducted the project by bringing together the instream flow coordinators from all 50 state fish and wildlife management agencies and the six U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regions in 1995 and again in 1996.

NIFPA was a huge success. The project helped states identify specific needs in their instream flow programs and directed them to other states that could help strengthen those areas. The project produced a series of videos on the Public Trust Doctrine that has been widely viewed and acclaimed across the country. But perhaps the most important accomplishment of NIFPA was simply bringing together the instream flow administrators from each state fish and wildlife management agency. These encounters helped people realize the challenges they faced were the same ones faced in every part of the country and there was much to be gained from continuing this type of interaction on a permanent basis.

After the 1995 meeting, Gary Smith and I began looking into the merits of a new professional organization that would perpetuate the spirit of NIFPA. By the time the 1996 NIFPA meeting arrived we were convinced of the need for the new organization and put together a steering committee that represented all parts of the country. In addition to Gary and I the group included Steve Filipek (AR), Rick Jacobson (CT), Gary Whelan (MI), Ian Chisholm (MN), Larry Hutchinson (NE), Randy Moss (TX) and John Kauffman (VA). This group developed the basic concept of the new organization in impromptu gatherings in empty meeting rooms during breaks, around dinner tables following meals and in each others' rooms

late at night. At the close of the '96 NIFPA meeting the steering committee presented their ideas to the NIFPA group and received a unanimous vote to proceed with development of the organization.

We began by surveying the 50 state fish and wildlife agencies to assess their instream flow needs and support for the IFC. Not surprisingly there were many needs. There was also strong support for the new organization (38 of 39 respondents indicated support). We then set about writing bylaws that reflected these needs. Doing so meant going places over the next two years we would never have gone on our own (steering committee meetings in Des Moines in 1996 and St. Louis in 1997). We did things we'd never have done otherwise (like lock ourselves in basement meeting rooms of hotels to work 14 hour days on Mother's Day weekend). Throughout this period, we developed friendships that led to a clearer understanding of instream flow issues throughout the country and inspired us to think of the legacy and powerful tool we hoped IFC could be to the public and aquatic resources in our home states and beyond.

Probably the biggest frustration of the steering committee was our realization that the Council we dream of won't be fully functional for several years yet. We already receive calls from organizations and individuals asking for various types of assistance. However before we can provide much formal help, we first need to make sure we represent the interests of Governing Council members. To that end, I'm excited about the two committees that were authorized by the Governing Council in Denver. We established one committee to develop IFC policies on regional, national and international instream flow needs and management issues that is being chaired by John Marshall (OH). The other committee is charged with developing similar standards for instream flow needs assessment protocols and is chaired by Ian Chisholm (MN). We're now working on finding funding for these committees so the participants can meet as a group to work on these projects. Input to those committees is crucial over the next two years. That's why it's a good idea for every state and province to join IFC and make sure the values and standards we develop reflect their interests, needs and concerns.

We've come a long way since Christopher first spawned the idea of improving interaction among instream flow administrators. The inaugural meeting of IFC in Denver this past March was a huge success as judged by the 50 or so professionals who attended. The 34 states and 2

provinces that have joined the Governing Council so far exceeded our admittedly conservative expectations for the first year and are a strong expression of the need for and importance of the IFC. Of course, we also now have a newsletter to help keep us informed of what's going on around the country.

Oliver Wendel Holmes noted long ago that "man's mind, when stretched to a new idea, never goes back to its original dimensions". NIFPA, and now the Instream Flow Council, have certainly stretched the minds of those who shared the privilege of being a part of them. Those events generated ideas of optimism, enthusiasm and encouragement that most of us hadn't experienced since the early days of our careers. It's exciting to finally have networking opportunities with other state and provincial instream flow specialists, to work toward standardizing policies and needs assessment strategies and have somewhere to turn when we need help with instream flow challenges that can't be met via usual means.

I hope you'll share the idea and vision of the Instream Flow Council by getting involved, providing input to the committees, volunteering assistance when you're called and keeping in touch with the other members of the Instream Flow Council. On behalf of all those who have worked to get us to where we are today, thanks for helping make history - and enjoy the ride as we make some more!