

Young Professional Spotlight

Young Professional members of AIFRB represent the next generation of leaders in fisheries science and management. Through *Briefs* and our social media platforms we will be highlighting our Young Professionals as a way to introduce them to the full membership and create opportunities for collaborations. AIFRB's Young Professional Representative, Connor Capizzano (connor.capizzano001@umb.edu), will be showcasing new Young Professionals throughout the year using a series of biographical interviews. This month's Young Professional Spotlight features **Matt Woodstock, Florida District and PhD student at Florida International University in North Miami, FL.**

Matthew Woodstock – Florida District



What is your current position, with what company/organization, and what is the focus of your research/work?

I am currently a PhD student at Florida International University in the Fisheries and Ecosystem Assessment Lab, which is located in North Miami, FL. My dissertation involves developing multi-species models for the oceanic (seaward of 1000 m isobath) Gulf of Mexico, with an emphasis on the trophic connectivity between mesopelagic fishes with tunas and billfishes. This project is part of the Deep Pelagic Nekton Dynamics of the Gulf of Mexico Consortium (DEEPEND; www.deependconsortium.org).

Where did you receive your education, and what helped pave your way to your current position?

I graduated from Beloit College in 2015 with a BS degree in Ecology, Evolution, and Behavioral Biology. In the spring of 2018, I received an MS in Marine Biology from Nova Southeastern University and started my PhD that fall. I have had great mentors that been encouraging and provided phenomenal advice. In particular, I was taught the importance of developing a diverse quantitative skillset, which has helped form collaborations with other researchers.

How does your work apply to, or influence, fishery management (e.g., stock assessments, sportfishing, commercial regulations, habitat protection, etc.)?

The offshore Gulf of Mexico is the temporary home for highly migratory commercial species (tunas and billfishes), which are monitored by NOAA and/or ICCAT. Multi-species models encompass these fishes, as well as other species within the ecosystem. My research will allow fisheries managers to practice ecosystem-based management when adjusting regulations.

What is your professional outlook for fisheries management? In other words, what will the future of fisheries management look like 10-20 years from now. What are we doing correctly, what needs to be improved (e.g., in research, policy, education)?

I believe we are in the beginning stages of implementing ecosystem-based fisheries management in this country (as well as much of the world). We do a great job of monitoring from a single-species approach, but indirect ecosystem effects (e.g., declines in prey abundance over time) are often not included in this



method. The influx of data regarding the life histories and population levels of non-commercial species is filling the gaps necessary to develop robust ecosystem models. We have a long way to go in terms of data collection and model development, but I believe an ensemble modeling approach (including multi- and single-species assessment methods) will become more commonplace in management.



What is the importance of young fishery professionals today and for the future of fishery management?

Young fishery professionals are going to drive the way management proceeds in the future. As human-caused stressors continue to disturb ecosystems, I believe young fishery professionals will develop innovative methods that advance our ability to manage marine fisheries. Personally, I believe young fishery professionals must be relentless in our efforts to manage the stocks of highly migratory species, both within national economic boundaries and in the high seas.

What drew you to AIFRB, and what does AIFRB do for you and what can it do for other young professionals in this field?

I was introduced to AIFRB through other young professional members. I had been looking for opportunities to get involved with professional societies and the AIFRB mission aligned with my interests. I wanted to be a part of a community of researchers that did similar work. Other young professionals should consider joining AIFRB because of the resources provided (networking events, workshop announcements, awards).

Please contact Matthew (fishesofthedeep@gmail.com) to continue the conversation!