



Missouri Chapter of the American Fisheries Society

2025 Letter of Recognition

Fostering opportunities for professional development and networking is critical to AFS' mission. Chapters and Divisions often struggle to demonstrate relevance to the careers of membership at all levels.

In early 2024, the North Central Division's Student and Early Career Professional Committee (SECPAC) approached Missouri Department of Conservation staff in hopes of re-starting a regional Conclave that would provide students and early career professionals an opportunity to learn field and lab skills ahead of the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in St. Louis. Denise Otto and Sarah Peper worked with SECPAC representatives throughout 2024 to host the event at the Busch Wildlife Area, line out the appropriate permissions and special use permits, provide sampling gear for demonstrations, and otherwise acted as a resource to ensure the event delivered for attendees.

An important part of professional development is giving people the opportunity to take on new tasks and initiatives, to give them the space and opportunity to act independently. While Sarah and Denise were happy to help as needed, they also provided students and SECPAC members with the tools and latitude to develop their own event. For their support of this event specifically and student development more generally, I would like to recognize Sarah Peper and Denise Otto.