

**AREA CONFERENCE GUIDE
AND
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
FOR
2002 CONFERENCE**

Part I. General Information and Background

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and direction for those interested in submitting proposals to host the AREA Conference in 2002. It establishes a formal process for sponsors to submit proposals for future conferences. We developed this document to help conference sponsors in planning and conducting the AREA Conference. There are many things to consider when hosting a conference and these specifications are not all inclusive and in no way should be considered as such. The Board utilized the collective experiences from previous conferences in preparing this document. These guidelines were intended to make future conferences easier, still maintain our level of professionalism and even make the process fun. If we omitted something or if an item needs to be changed, please present the Board with written comments.

The Aquatic Resource Education Association (AREA) is a professional organization of natural resource educators involved in providing fishery and aquatic resource educational programs and services. Association members are employed either by state or federal fish, wildlife and natural resource agencies, universities involved in resource education, the fishing tackle industry and other partners. Funding for these programs often comes from the Sport Fish Restoration Trust fund, which the United States Fish and Wildlife Service administers.

We organized and created AREA to foster, promote and encourage the following purposes:

- a. Increase AREA effectiveness through the promotion of continuous networking of local, state, federal, industry, fisheries and educational professionals involved in aquatic resource education programs by 1) identifying common goals; 2) addressing issues of common concern; and 3) developing professionalism and peer review.
- b. Provide decision makers and representatives at the national, regional and state level, and special interest groups and other publics, with expertise regarding aquatic education issues, strategies and methodologies.
- c. Provide an organized forum for issue identification, deliberation and resolution.
- d. Support aquatic resource management programs with appropriate information and education strategies.

- e. Develop strategic plans for the future; provide organization and direction to the members; and develop strategies to ensure adequate funding of aquatic education activities;
- f. Serve as a communication liaison between agencies, and industry and state aquatic resource education coordinators to develop, promote, and report on program activities.
- g. To promote education and wise-use management and conservation of aquatic resources, and those recreational sports related to them.

The primary forum for these activities is the Association's conference, which occurs every two years.

Definitions

AREA Board. The Board is the executive governing body of the association. The Board contains four officers; Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary and regional representatives.

AREA National Conference Committee.

- Vice Chair
- Other member from AREA Board of Directors
- Chairperson of previous Conference
- At least two staff from previous Conference
- At least two people from current host state/local conference committee.
- Where possible, at least two members from local conference committee for next conference.

The Board appoints members to this committee for four-year terms.

Local Conference Committee. This group includes the AREA members' agency staff (or other member agencies if there is multi-state sponsorship) sponsoring the conference.

Conference proposal. A proposal from potential sponsors or local conference committee outlining their proposed conference dates, times and location of the conference.

Hotel request for proposal. A template used by sponsors to solicit bids for conference location. Its use is not mandatory. However, we suggest its use.

Responsibilities

The Board has the following conference responsibilities:

- appoint AREA board members to the National Conference Committee.
- provide the National Conference Committee with broad direction on a conference focus.
- review National Committee recommendations for conference sites and approve conference location and conference agenda.

Responsibilities for the **National Conference Committee** include:

- Solicitation collection and review of proposals
- Give Board recommendations for conference sites
- Solicitation, review and selection for technical session presenters/symposia (i.e. call for papers)
- Solicitation of speakers from national partners for large group sessions
- Long range (5-to 10-yr) conference coordination and planning
- Give potential sponsors direction and recommendations for scheduling and site selection
- Serve as liaison between Board and Sponsor
- review and approval of AREA expenditures related to the conference
- Solicitation of national sponsors, including but not limited to: US Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Federal Aid, American Sportfishing Association

Responsibilities of **Local Conference Committee** include:

- Prepare and submit a proposal to host the conference following specifications included.

After selection

- Secure a conference site by establishing contract with conference lodging and/or meeting provider
- Provide at least two members to the national conference committee
- Conference program planning (with AREA Conference Committee)
- Conference promotion, registration and on-site support
- Transportation for field trips and other off-site activities
- Collection of conference registration fees, payment/travel for speakers and other expenses directly related to the conference
- Coordination of social activities
- Coordination of an exhibit session/sharing fair
- Solicitation of local/regional sponsors

Part II. Conference specifications

We provide this information to guide potential conference hosts in their selection of times, dates and sites for their conference proposal. We will review all proposals to ensure compliance with these specifications.

A. Conference Times and Dates:

1. We typically spread the conference over five or six days, with two of those days for travel. Typically the bulk of formal activities occurs during the day, with the evening reserved for informal exchange and other non-AREA meetings.
2. Dates must be selected to reduce conflicts with other national conferences and events sponsored by organizations such as (but not limited to) American Fisheries Society, North American Association of Environmental Educators, Project WILD, National Marine Educators Association, National Association of Interpreters, Project Learning Tree, Project WET, Association for Conservation Information.
3. The conference dates and start/stop times should also be selected to take advantage of reduced air travel. This may include Saturday overnight, avoiding holidays and other travel rush periods.
4. Conference dates should be selected so that outdoor field trips are possible and occur in what we call “reasonable” weather conditions. For example, the weather in Michigan in late February or Arizona in August is not what many would consider reasonable.
5. Potential hosts should also consider the typical busy seasons for AREA members. While this varies from state to state, often there is a spring and fall busy season. Perhaps the conference host might want to survey the membership to learn the best time for the conference. This will ensure good attendance, and reduce conflicts in scheduling. Informal Sponsors can conduct surveys of AREA membership through the AREA-Listserver or through regional AREA representatives.

B. Conference Location

1. General Description. We have held past AREA conferences in Corpus Christi Texas, State College, Pennsylvania and Baltimore, Maryland. Each of these sites offered a relaxed but professional atmosphere that was well received by AREA members. There is no perfect site, but there are plenty of ideal sites. We favor conference locations that offer convenient access to unique aquatic resources. The following specifications should help you narrow down your choices.
 - a. A conference site must be within a 30-minute drive of a major international airport. However, sites serviced by a minimum of 10 connector flights per day

from major international airports are acceptable, if flights are available seven days per week, and costs are not prohibitive.

b. Rental car services should be available nearby.

c. Restaurants or other eating establishments should be within walking distance.

d. Aquatic resource-related field trips must be available within one hour's drive of the site. Field trips may include, but are not limited to: fish hatchery/culture stations, state or national parks with significant water resources, scenic or historic waterways, museums or aquaria.

2. Lodging, meeting and meal location specifics.

Note: Conference sponsors wishing to submit a conference proposal are encouraged to use the hotel request for proposal template (attachment A). They should offer this proposal to hotels/conference facilities at your desired city. This should help your selection and give you some additional guidance on site selection beyond what is presented here. The AREA Board and Conference Committee encourage you to solicit these proposals from more than one hotel. However, it is not mandatory.

a. Overnight lodging must hold up to 150 people in single or double occupancy rooms. Bunkhouses or sleeping lodges are not acceptable.

b. Conference sites where lodging, general session and breakout meeting locations are combined are most desirable by AREA. However, sometimes proposals for sites where meeting and lodging are separate will be accepted for review, especially where meeting rooms are within a two-minute walk from sleeping rooms and/or large group meeting area.

c. The Sponsor should include some meals as part of the conference. This may include the opening luncheon, daily breaks (coffee and afternoon snacks), several lunches, one dinner and the banquet. Sponsors should consult previous conference booklets for the specifics on these meals. If the site is unable to provide meals, the sponsor must provide this service. In addition, restaurant facilities should be within walking distance of the conference location.

d. Room specifications.

(1.) Large meeting room should seat 150 people in auditorium-style seating. This room also must have a public address system, projection video and overhead and slide projectors. This room will be used at least once each day, likely all day the first day of the conference.

(2.) Breakout rooms should hold up to 50 people and be equipped with a public

address system, video cassette player & tv, digital, slide and overhead projectors, and easel with pads/flip chart. We will need these rooms for the duration of the conference.

(3.) The exhibit area should be capable of handling as many as 50 table-top or free-standing displays. The location must provide electricity and tables. Controlled access to this room is desired, but not a requirement. This room will be needed at least one day, preferably two.

f. The site should have banquet facilities for the last night of the conference. This includes a buffet meal, a speaker dais, public address system. In addition, the host may wish to have a band or disc jockey for entertainment. In these instances the banquet facilities should include a dance floor.

g. Airport shuttle—ideally, the hotel other vendors will provide transportation to and from the airport. However, when this shuttle service is unavailable, the conference sponsor must supply this service.

h. Audio/Visual—it is to the state host's advantage to select a site that can provide a/v support. Use hotel RFP template for specifics. If host state will assume these responsibilities refer to room specifics in part d, above. In many large cities companies provide these services.

i. Reservations—location must be able to take individual room reservations and bill individuals.

i. Complimentary rooms—many locations offer complimentary rooms as part of the conference package. The conference sponsor may use these rooms for out-of-town speaker lodging, agency staff assisting with conference or local conference committee. The Sponsor should identify the number of complimentary rooms in the conference proposal.

C. Conference Session Specifics

1. Sessions & Presentations

The National Committee will identify speakers and presenters and the Sponsor for the conference. This includes plenary (a large group) sessions and technical presentations. The sponsor is responsible only for on-site needs for speakers and presenters. This includes lodging and meeting room arrangements, audio visual, compiling session and speaker information.

Past conferences have followed this format. (*We provide this information only as an aid in planning--it's not a requirement that the program look exactly like this*)

Day 1: Travel and informal social activities

Day 2: Formal welcome, large group presentations on issues of national interest.

May have small group sessions in afternoon

Day 3: Breakout (small group) technical sessions all day

Day 4: Breakout (small group) technical sessions all day

Day 5: Field Trips & banquet

Day 6: AREA Business Meeting, Regional AREA & USFWS meetings. Travel

2. Conference Booklet

The Sponsor will prepare a conference booklet with brief descriptions of each session, conference schedule and other pertinent information. This should be part of the pre-registration information package.

3. Field Trips

Field trips must be related to aquatic resource education. In the past this included: natural history field trips to specific resources, visits to hatcheries, research facilities, aquaria, fisheries sampling, and aquatic resource related recreation. When in doubt about the appropriateness of a field trip, consult the conference committee or previous conference offerings.

4. Exhibits/Share Fair/Poster Session

This is an informal opportunity for members to share new materials, displays, resources, audio/visual presentations and displays. Typically this area is set up more than one or two days of the conference. The conference sponsor must organize this event and coordinate delivery and shipping of materials.

5. Social activities

a. Hospitality suite--Sponsors should establish and staff an area that lets members interact in an informal setting. This may be a hospitality suite and should be available to members throughout the conference.

b. Banquet--Sponsors should plan the banquet for the last evening of the conference. This includes planning the meal, planning the evening's entertainment, speakers and any awards presented. The Sponsor should include costs for the banquet in the conference registration.

6. Regional meetings.

The USFWS Regional Aquatic Education Specialists may hold their own regional meetings. Conference sponsors will be responsible for meeting room arrangements for these meetings. Typically these meetings are at least two hours long.

D. Timetable of Events

Listed below are some critical deadlines established by the AREA Board. Once the Board has made a selection for a site, there may be other deadlines established by the Board, the Conference Committee or the sponsors.

- Submit Proposal for 2002 Conference (potential sponsors)-**April 1, 2001**
- Announce date/location (Sponsor)--**2002:12 months prior to date**
- Call for papers (Conference Committee)--**9 months prior**
- Speaker Selection (Conference Committee)--**6 months prior**
- Pre-registration
 - 1. Registration teaser (Sponsor)--**9-12 months prior**
 - 2. Registration materials (sponsor)--**in participants hands 6 months prior**
- Conference
- Submit a final report to board (includes a financial report)--**3 months after conference**

E. Registration Requirements

Because of the competition for time and financial resources, AREA membership will benefit from an early announcement of the dates and times of the conference. The sponsor cannot make this announcement too early, but they should make it at least one year prior to the event (exceptions can and will be made for 2002 conference). It is not necessary for this announcement to be a formal one.

Part III. Information requested from host state

Section A. Narrative

This is where you present your proposal for the 2002 Conference to the Committee. You should also explain why you think your site will be a good one for the AREA conference. In doing so, we ask that you address each item listed in Part II Conference Specifications. Conference dates and/or conference sites that don't meet the specifications will not be considered.

Section B. Estimated Budget

Include in this section your proposed budget for the Conference. The Committee and Board are particularly interested in the following: registration material costs, conference registration fees, miscellaneous expenses including: travel, and field trips and to identify potential funding needs.

Section C. Proposed timetable

This should outline your plan of action for the conference, with specific dates (from #6 in Part 2) identified.

Section D. Identification of key contacts

In this section you need to provide information on each of the state contacts. You should identify who will coordinate activities at the site, field trips, conference finances and conference registration.

Submit 10 copies of your proposal to:

**Mr. Carl Richardson
Chair, AREA Board of Directors
PA Fish and Boat Commission
PO Box 67000
Harrisburg, PA 17106-7000**

Proposals for the 2002 conference must be postmarked by April 1, 2001.

Questions regarding this proposal should be submitted in writing (electronic or snail mail) to Carl Richardson at the address above.

Attachment A

Hotel Request for Proposal Template

Use the attached template to obtain bids or pricing information from hotels and conference centers. The template may also provide you with additional information regarding conference site needs. The template is available in electronic format from the AREA Secretary.

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
FROM HOTELS**
for
[insert your date] **Annual Conference**
of
**AQUATIC RESOURCE
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

The Aquatic Resource Education Association and [your state] are soliciting proposals from hotels interested in serving as host for its [insert your date] conference. The following information is provided to assist potential hosts in preparing a preliminary proposal that will be reviewed and evaluated to determine which site will best meet the needs of the organization:

SECTION 1. ORGANIZATIONS

1.1 THE AQUATIC RESOURCE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (AREA)

The Aquatic Resource Education Association (AREA) is a professional organization of natural resource educators involved in providing fishery and aquatic resource educational programs and services. Association members are employed either by state or federal fish, wildlife and natural resource agencies, universities involved in resource education, the fishing tackle industry and other partners. Funding for these programs often comes from the Sport Fish Restoration Trust fund, which the United States Fish and Wildlife Service administers.

1.3 (your agency info goes here)

1.4 CONTACT PERSONS

[DATE] Conference Coordinator:
(Insert your agency contact here)

1.5 NON-PROFIT STATUS

AREA is a national non-profit, public service organization. The Association's Federal Identification Number is 45-0438164.

SECTION 2. CONFERENCE

2.1 AREA ACTIVITIES

We organized and created AREA to foster, promote and encourage the following purposes:

Increase AREA effectiveness through the promotion of continuous networking of local, state, federal, industry, fisheries and educational professionals involved in aquatic resource education programs by 1) identifying common goals; 2) addressing issues of common concern; and 3) developing professionalism and peer review.

The conference is one forum used by AREA to achieve that mission.

2.2 DATES OF CONFERENCE

[insert your dates here]

2.3 ROOM BLOCK AND ANTICIPATED ATTENDANCE

DAY	1	2	3	4	5
DATE					
ROOMS					

SECTION 3. INFORMATION REQUIRED

3.1 STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT

Please provide a short overview statement of the hotel's unique abilities to meet the needs of AREA, its commitment to providing the best possible service and why we should choose your hotel over any other.

3.2 ROOM RATES

State the prices for single, double/twin, suites, additional persons and special rooms. Bidders should be aware that most attendees will be traveling on government per diem. State the current conference rates and the projected increases for [date]. State when the room rate will be confirmed prior to the convention. Often, conference attendees will come early or stay after a conference to enjoy the amenities of the host site. Please state your policy concerning extending conference rates outside the official dates of the conference.

3.3 CUT-OFF DATE

State the hotel policy for holding room blocks. When will reservations be required? At what point will the room block be released?

3.4 CHECK-IN/OUT TIME

State current policy and any special considerations that the hotel makes, such as express check-in/out, bell service, baggage checks etc.

3.5 RESERVATIONS

State your reservations policy and procedures. How are reservations to be made?

3.6 CREDIT ARRANGEMENTS

All guests will be responsible for their individual room charges. Most attendees will be

government employees, some of whom will be using vouchers, credit cards or direct agency billings. Please state the procedures for obtaining prior credit approval.

3.7 COMPLIMENTARY ROOMS

State the number and types of rooms normally provided and under what conditions.

3.8 FUNCTION SPACE

The conference will need space as outlined on the attached sheet. Please complete this form and describe the room arrangements that will be provided to meet these needs. Please be specific concerning which rooms you are proposing. Special restrictions and location details should be outlined. State any charges that will be applied to the use of hotel facilities.

3.9 EXHIBITORS

The conference always provides space for exhibitors. The number of exhibitors will range from 30 to 45, depending on the location of the conference and the specific interests of the organization. Most exhibitors will bring their own displays, which do not usually exceed 10 feet. Some are table-top displays and the hotel will be requested to provide for these.

3.10 HOSPITALITY, MEALS AND BANQUET SERVICES

The Conference will hold a number of breakfasts and luncheons and an awards banquet. We will also provide daily coffee/soda breaks. Describe the number and type of facilities available for meals. State the usual pricing for group meals including service charges. Include copies of menus from in-house restaurants and cafes. Indicate any special arrangements that can be made or services for which your hotel is especially noted. Please discuss arrangements that can be made for a hospitality room during the conference.

3.11 PARKING AND AIRPORT TRANSPORTATION

Discuss the hotel parking arrangements and costs for both guests and daily visitors to the conference. Is airport transportation provided, and if so, what is the cost?

3.12 PERFORMANCE CLAUSE

State hotel's policy concerning the Association's obligations should the number of attendees fall below expectations. Additionally, bidder should indicate their ability to handle attendance above that projected.

3.13 CANCELLATION/AMENDMENT

Once a contract is signed, it is not anticipated that the Organization will change its meeting location without cause. Please state hotel policy concerning cancellation or amendment to our contract.

**Attachment B.
Miscellaneous Articles/Reprints on Conference Planning.**