



FELLOW NEWS

News for and about the NOAA Fellows

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FOCUS ON FELLOWS

Heidi Nutters



As a child growing up in California’s San Francisco Bay Area, Heidi Nutters listened on stormy nights for the crash of ocean waves. She bicycled with her friends through the city’s many green spots to pick fragrant bouquets and felt the sand slip through her fingers as she built castles by the shore.

Today, Coastal Fellow Heidi Nutters is working to protect the places she treasures, promoting climate change adaptation planning on behalf of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC).

Although Heidi remembers always being concerned about the environment, a trip as a teen through the Andes Mountains and Amazon Rainforest in Bolivia “was life-changing—it sparked my interest in ecology, communities, and working together to preserve pristine areas,” she says.

While studying for a B.A. in cultural and interdisciplinary studies at Antioch College, Heidi took every opportunity through coursework and internships to broaden her worldview. “I was very interested in conservation and sustainable development, and how they can both be achieved,” explains Heidi, who studied resource management in Brazil and also worked at an organic farm in Ecuador and a retreat center in the Bahamas.

After graduation, Heidi indulged her wanderlust, working in botany and natural resource management across California and travelling to Spain, Argentina, and other far-flung places. One position required that Heidi write a portion of an environmental impact report on how recreational users were affected by marine protected areas in California. “Working on marine and ocean issues—and the ‘people piece’ of natural resource management—really inspired me,” she notes.

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Soon after this experience, Heidi began an M.A. program at Brown University's Center for Environmental Studies. Her thesis again delved into the human component, as she researched marine spatial planning efforts in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. "I spent a lot of time in the homes and on the boats of commercial fishermen," says Heidi. "I really came to appreciate how much they knew about ocean ecosystems, and also how dependent they are on the ocean for their livelihoods."

To her delight, Heidi's fellowship allows her to further explore the intersection between coastal issues and communities on the ground. Her work supports BCDC's Adapting to Rising Tides project. "As part of the vulnerability assessment process for sea level rise and extreme storms, I'm working with local governments and nonprofit organizations in the Bay Area that deal with social justice and equity issues," she notes. "We're trying to figure out which socioeconomic groups in our study area are most vulnerable and how we can address these factors in our adaptation planning processes."

As part of her fellowship, Heidi and her colleagues have developed and presented workshops and trainings to assist local governments with adaptation and climate action planning. "We're also involved in the California

King Tides Initiative," she adds. "During extreme high-tide events, called king tides, we encourage local residents to take photos of flood-prone areas, and these photos help us visualize future sea level rise and our changing shorelines." Other outreach events are decidedly unconventional, says Heidi. "A local bar here hosts a regular 'Nerd Night,' where we presented our king tides project, and it was a lot of fun!"

Heidi is full of praise for the support of her BCDC mentors—Lindy Lowe, a senior planner, and Sara Polgar, a coastal planner and former NOAA coastal fellow. She also compliments the NOAA Coastal Services Center and BCDC for their professional development support. With the help of BCDC, Heidi became certified in permaculture design, which improves urban environments through design, land management practices, and green infrastructure.

What are Heidi's plans after the fellowship? "I've loved 'doing it all' in the fellowship—adaptation-related research that I can put into an applied context, working with local governments, and becoming plugged in to the social science community," she explains. "I hope to continue working on natural resource issues that bring together human interactions, climate change issues, and communities on the ground." 



FOCUS ON FELLOWS Kate Skaggs

For Coastal Fellow Kate Skaggs, life began in urban, bustling College Park, Maryland. But when she was 12 years old, her family moved to rural Franklin County, Virginia, a place that Kate claims "has more cows than people."

This experience turned out to be quite a culture shock, but one with a hidden gift. Kate found that people with varying backgrounds and experiences are likely to view and respond to the same issue in different ways. Today she puts this understanding to good use, listening closely to the differing perspectives of Washington State's coastal residents and supporting their local efforts to plan for sea level rise.

Despite her city surroundings in early childhood, Kate and her family had plenty of opportunities to enjoy the outdoors during weeks at the beach in Maryland and camping trips to the Adirondacks in New York.

As an undergraduate at Lynchburg College, Kate was happy to discover that her environmental science B.S. coursework required many lab excursions to Virginia's wetlands, mountains, and Chesapeake Bay area. A physical oceanography course during her sophomore year stood out as a turning point.

"I really didn't know what to expect, because the ocean is nowhere near our campus. But our professor had us save up lab hours, and then we spent a long weekend on Tybee Island, Georgia," says Kate. "I just fell in love with the marshes and knew that I wanted to pursue coastal management of some kind."

Kate decided to obtain an M.S. in environmental studies at the College of Charleston, with a certificate in urban and regional planning. Two geography professors, Annette Watson and Kevin Keenan, taught Kate to question her own unconscious cultural assumptions and to appreciate the varied "human geography"—the divergent experiences and values—of people who share coastal resources.

"My graduate thesis examined two conservation projects taking place in the South Carolina Lowcountry, and my thesis advisor, Professor Watson, told me, 'Don't go into a region with preconceived ideas about its problems. Instead, pay attention to the local social and political structure, and listen to people.'"

These lessons on listening closely and questioning her own assumptions are integral to Kate's fellowship project for the Washington Department of Ecology's Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program. She is completing a guidebook that will help local governments share information and plan for sea level rise. The project is part of the state's comprehensive planning initiative for the marine shoreline.

"I spent my first six months in the fellowship meeting with people and learning about who was doing which coastal project in what location," notes Kate. "Meeting with so many people helped me understand the physical and social geography of the Pacific Northwest region."

Kate's colleagues are extremely supportive, especially her mentors Kathy Taylor, supervisor of the aquatic lands cleanup unit, and Brian Lynn, manager of the coastal and shorelines section. Another invaluable ally is the sea level

rise advisory committee, which is made up of representatives from tribal government, other government agencies, stakeholders, and conservation groups.

"In the guidebooks and in talking with local planners, I emphasize that planning for sea level rise doesn't have to be a massive new undertaking. It can be as simple as designating one person in the public works or planning department to pay more attention to the land-sea interface," emphasizes Kate. "If a place is already vulnerable to flooding, planners will want to give more consideration to critical infrastructure in that area. For example, if a community is investing millions in a new road, planning for sea level rise is important because they'll want that road to be undamaged by sea level rise within its lifetime."

Kate has thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to capture the stories of people on the Washington coast, and to share these stories with the rest of the region. "After the fellowship ends, I am open to other opportunities. But I'm just starting to know the human and physical geography of this area, and it's exciting," says Kate. "I'd love to do more exploring and learning here!" 

FOCUS ON THE CENTER

THE DIGITAL COAST WEBINAR SERIES

You can connect with geospatial experts and colleagues from the comfort of your own computer through the Digital Coast Webinar Series. Each month for one hour, this webinar series sheds light on a coastal management topic using demonstrations, case studies, and opportunities to engage with coastal professionals and field specialists. For information on upcoming Digital Coast webinars, check out the NOAA Coastal Services Center's training page at www.csc.noaa.gov/training.

In addition, previously recorded Digital Coast webinars are available for download any time you can spare an hour at www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/webinar/archive.html. Several past webinars are described below.

Community Resilience, Parts I and II – Part I outlines the Roadmap for Adapting to Coastal Risk, a process that helps communities characterize their

vulnerabilities to hazards and climate change and assess how plans and policies already on the books can incorporate vulnerability issues. Part II highlights The Nature Conservancy's Coastal Resilience project and features case studies in which communities are assessing local vulnerabilities and developing options for action.

Engaging Stakeholders in Coastal Management through Participatory Mapping – Webinar attendees receive tips on getting stakeholders involved in participatory mapping projects that use GIS. Attendees will also learn how participatory mapping has helped communities establish conservation priorities, collect traditional knowledge for restoration planning, and map coastal human uses for nearshore areas.

How Has Your County Changed? – Participants discover how Coastal Change Analysis Program (C-CAP) data can be

used to examine county, state, and regional changes in land cover. Participants also see how data “viewers” such as the Land Cover Atlas can be used to visualize county land cover changes and provide a starting point for community planning.

Mapping and Visualizing Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding Impacts – Attendees learn about the benefits of interactive, online maps for visualizing inundation risks and potential impacts. They also find out about the Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding Impacts Viewer, its current status, and plans for expanding the tool to the rest of the coastal U.S.

Using ENOW Data to Help Monitor Economic Health in Coastal Communities – Economics: National Ocean Watch (ENOW) incorporates data on many vital economic sectors that are supported by the oceans and Great Lakes. Webinar participants learn more about ENOW and find out how to use ENOW data for their own county-level spatial analysis. 

WHAT'S NEW ON DIGITAL COAST?

Economics: National Ocean Watch (ENOW) Explorer – The explorer's simple interface makes it easy for users to interact with and view economic data and trends, at www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/tools/enow.

Preparing to Write Your Strategic Plan – This workbook guides the user in gathering the information—and getting the organizational “buy-in”—needed to create a strong and successful strategic plan, at www.csc.noaa.gov/publications/strategic_planning.html.

usSEABED – Developed by the U.S. Geological Survey, usSEABED contains over 300,000 site observations of seafloor sediment and physical character information for U.S. waters from the intertidal zone to the deep ocean, at www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/data/usseabed.

To subscribe to the Digital Coast Updates e-newsletter, visit www.csc.noaa.gov/publications/subscriptions.html.

FOCUS ON THE COASTAL FELLOWSHIP: SEA GRANT ENDORSEMENTS

The NOAA Coastal Services Center has received the 2012-2014 Coastal Management Fellowship endorsements from Sea Grant. The Center received 69 applications from 24 Sea Grant programs across the country. Using four criteria—academic performance and diversity of educational background, endorsement by the applicant’s Sea Grant director, support from two letters of recommendation, and content of the applicant’s goal statement—12 finalists will be selected from among these candidates.

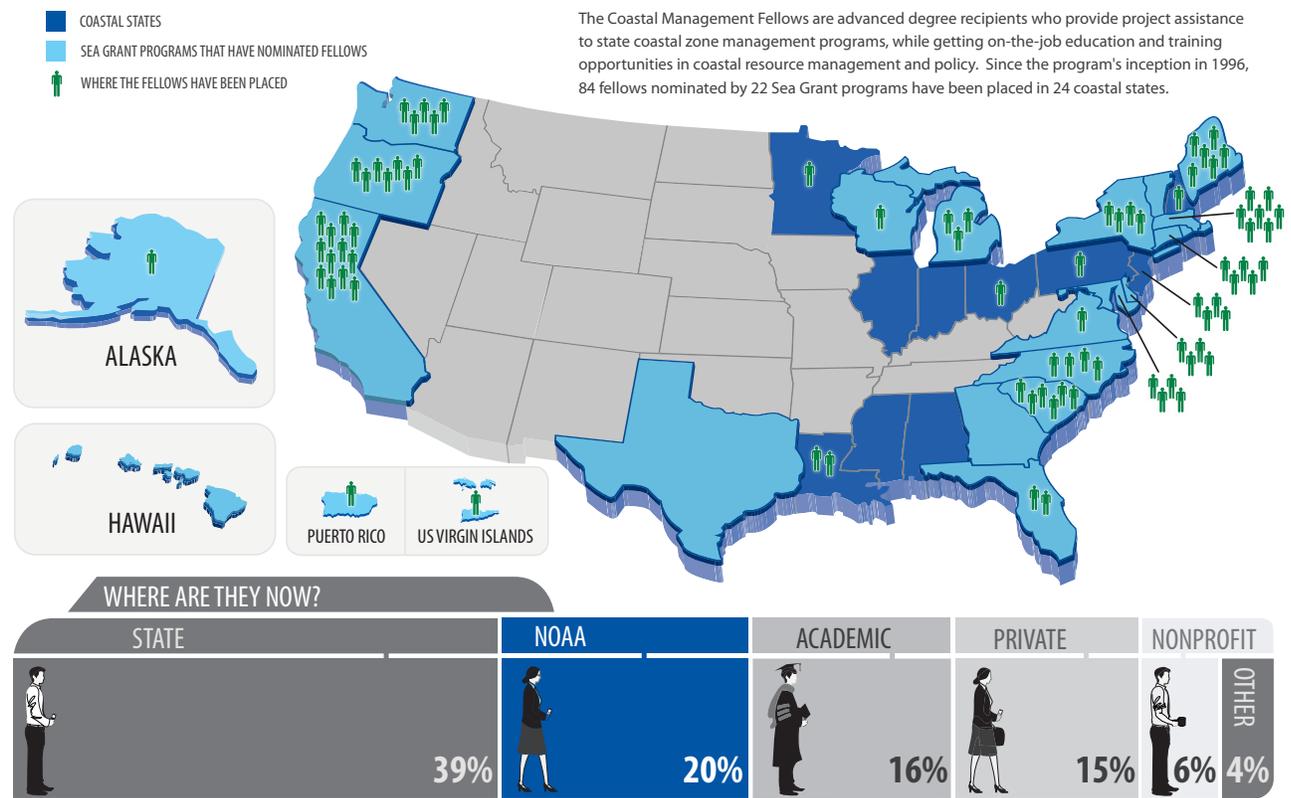
A workshop to match states with fellows will take place in Charleston, South Carolina, from April 30 to May 4, 2012. Of the finalists selected, six will be placed with a host state. Each of the selected host states will send its fellow mentor to the placement workshop, and the finalists will be brought to the workshop at the expense of the Center.

The workshop consists of an orientation, project proposal presentations, finalist presentations, finalist and host state interviews, and fellow matching. If a state does not

find a suitable candidate during the workshop, it will be given the option to defer fellow placement for one year. States will only be allowed one deferment before they have to reapply.

This year, the host states are California (San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission), Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Washington. For more information on 2012 state projects, please visit the fellowship website at www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/fellows/stateprojects.html or contact the fellowship coordinator at csc.fellowships@noaa.gov.

COASTAL MANAGEMENT FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM



NOAA Coastal Services Center
2234 South Hobson Avenue
Charleston, SC 29405-2413



UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

APRIL

30 to May 4: Conference of the National Water
Quality Monitoring Council

Portland, Oregon

<http://acwi.gov/monitoring/conference/2012>

MAY

4 to 7: River Rally 2012

Portland, Oregon

www.rivernetwork.org/events/national-river-rally-2012

JUNE

3 to 6: The Coastal Society's 23rd International
Conference

Miami, Florida

www.thecoastalsociety.org/conference/tcs23

For more information on upcoming events, please
visit www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/conferences.html.

NOAA COASTAL SERVICES CENTER TRAINING

APRIL

On-Site:

24 to 26: Climate Adaptation for Coastal Communities
East Falmouth, Massachusetts

MAY

Online:

10: Nonpoint Source Pollution and Erosion Comparison Tool

On-Site:

1 to 3: Coastal Introduction to GIS
Fort Myers, Florida

22 to 24: Coastal Introduction to GIS
Silver Spring, Maryland

JUNE

On-Site:

4 to 7: Climate Adaptation for Coastal Communities
Tuckerton, New Jersey

For more information on virtual and site-specific trainings, visit www.csc.noaa.gov/training.

CREDITS AND INFORMATION

Fellow News is published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Coastal Services Center to relay information about the fellowship program and provide a forum for information exchange among fellows, mentors, Sea Grant, and the Center.

Please send your questions and suggestions for future editions to csc.fellowships@noaa.gov

Co-Editors: Margaret Allen, Kitty Fabey | Communications Director: Donna McCaskill | Copy Editor: Gerald Esch | Graphic Designer: Frank Ruopoli