



FELLOW NEWS

News for and about the NOAA Fellows

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FOCUS ON FELLOWS: Dan Robinson



Sailing, kayaking, hiking, and especially surfing—Coastal Fellow Dan Robinson has done it all, exploring the coastal environment in more than 30 countries while catching the waves wherever he can in destinations ranging from California’s Big Sur to Chile’s Punta de Lobos. For Dan, surfing is not just a pastime but a passion, deepening his resolve to help protect the coastal ecosystem.

“I grew up in Summit, New Jersey, 45 minutes from the shore, and my family was not very interested in the ocean,” says Dan. But that changed when Dan spent two semesters abroad during his junior year at New York’s St. Lawrence University.

“I spent a semester in one of the most beautiful places in the world, Mexico’s Baja Peninsula, with the National Outdoor Leadership School,” says Dan, whose experience included sea kayaking, backpacking, and sailing. The next semester was spent visiting nine countries around the world while studying on board a converted cruise ship in the Semester at Sea (SAS) program.

“During SAS, I noticed intense ecological degradation and rash coastal planning along the coasts of all these developing countries, and that struck a chord with me. When I got back to school, that experience cemented my decision to get a combined B.A. in environmental studies and government,” notes Dan.

After graduation, he headed to Santa Cruz, California, and spent the next four years working and playing off California’s coast. “Santa Cruz has cliffs and redwoods and beautiful beaches, and it was where I fell in love with surfing, which made me want to protect the coast even more,” he said. Dan also worked as a sea kayaking guide and instructor in Monterey Bay and the Elkhorn Slough National Estuarine Research Reserve.

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Dan found that he enjoyed teaching and, seeking exotic surfing destinations, decided to complete a degree in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL). He subsequently spent a year teaching in Ecuador and Chile—often rising before dawn on Saturdays to take a bus to the coast, surfing whenever he could and returning late on Sundays.

Witnessing the beauty—and development problems—of Chile’s coastline, Dan realized that teaching was not his lifelong career goal. Driven to know more about coastal and ocean law and policy, Dan attended the University of Rhode Island to complete an M.A. in marine affairs. This is where he delved into the study of ecosystem-based management (EBM), “a holistic way of looking at ecosystems and how to manage them. It doesn’t take a narrow, species-by-species approach but considers multiple factors, including the community’s cultural and socioeconomic values and goals,” he notes.

His coastal fellowship at the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) involves looking at ways to implement core components of EBM—such as marine spatial planning—in the context of projected climate change.

“Climate change is really the big policy issue at BCDC, and our agency is one of several in the country at the forefront of this issue,” says Dan. “It’s exciting but also complicated and challenging. My first six months were spent researching EBM efforts in the Bay area, reading as much as I could, and conducting interviews with people working on EBM inside and outside the agency,” he adds.



Dan surfing at Point Judith in Narragansett, Rhode Island.

Since then, Dan has been using a geographic information system to map subtidal ownership and human uses within San Francisco Bay, and he has supported an interagency effort to create science, restoration, and management goals for the Bay’s subtidal habitats.

“These projects will help with plans for the submerged lands and for all future uses of the Bay—wetland and eelgrass restoration, aquaculture, tidal energy, new water transportation, those sorts of issues,” he says. Dan has also created a marine spatial planning pilot project for a portion of the Bay and has assembled a diverse advisory stakeholder committee to consider zoning scenarios, regulations, and recommendations.

Two mentors have helped Dan navigate these tasks while staying on

track—Caitlin Sweeney, BCDC’s chief deputy director, and Brenda Goeden, the agency’s dredging program manager. “They’re great,” says Dan, “and always there for me.”

What career course does Dan plan to chart once the fellowship ends? “I’m especially interested in ‘outer-coast’ issues such as coastal development and planning, as well as climate change. Having said that, I want to keep an open mind and consider any promising opportunities in the private or nonprofit sector,” he says. Whatever the future holds, one thing is certain: Dan will continue to ride the waves wherever possible. “It’s just something I love to do, and each time I surf, I remember why the coast needs protection.” 

FOCUS ON THE CENTER

Digital Coast Is in the Spotlight at Coastal GeoTools 2009

Wouldn't it be great if coastal data were accessible from one website? The site could also include the training, tools, and examples needed to turn these data into useful information. And since we're dreaming—couldn't we come a bit closer to changing the world if the site were used not only by the federal government, but also by the private sector, nonprofits, county governments, state programs—and anyone else interested in the wise management of coastal resources?

Guess what? The dream is becoming a reality with the launch of the Center's Digital Coast initiative at www.csc.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/.

The website showcases all the Center's data, training, and tools related to geospatial technology—and future phases of Digital Coast will include user feedback and added data and information from partners and contributors.

"This initiative is more than just a website—it's the public face and information resource of a great collaborative partnership that represents many local, state, and federal agencies and nongovernmental organizations," says Josh Murphy, the Center's Digital Coast project manager. "Digital Coast features the geospatial information these organizations bring to bear, and it highlights some of the most important questions and issues facing the coastal resource management community," adds Murphy.

The Digital Coast founding partners include the NOAA Coastal Services Center, Association of State Floodplain Managers, Coastal States Organization, National Association of Counties, National States Geographic Information Council, and The Nature Conservancy.

Coming Up: Coastal GeoTools 2009

"Building the Digital Coast" is the theme of Coastal GeoTools 2009, a biennial conference sponsored by the Center and taking place this year in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, March 2 to 5, 2009. Coastal GeoTools—which was attended last year by 400 participants from 32 states, 4 territories, and 3 foreign countries—is a popular event for coastal professionals seeking to learn more about geospatial data and tools and to network with others in the field.

"Through plenaries, oral and poster presentations, and workshops, GeoTools participants will meet other potential contributors to the Digital Coast and learn about on-the-ground uses of this technology that are happening in coastal management," says Murphy. "We're convinced that participants will leave this conference with many ideas for using, and contributing to, the Digital Coast to address and showcase solutions to issues in their coastal communities," he adds.

To learn more about Coastal GeoTools 2009 visit www.csc.noaa.gov/geotools/.

FOCUS ON THE COASTAL FELLOWSHIP:

2009 State Projects Selected

Six exciting new projects have been selected for the 2009–2011 Coastal Management Fellowship. Below is a summary of each of these projects for the coming year. Recruiting efforts are well underway, but we need your help to spread the word to eligible applicants. Remember, applications should be submitted to area Sea Grant directors and are due no later than January 26, 2009.

Host Agency: California Coastal Commission

Location: San Francisco, California

Project Goal: Develop a collection of climate change information and use that information to develop a series of public workshops

Host Agency: San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission

Location: San Francisco, California

Project Goal: Promote planning for adaptation to climate change for San Francisco Bay and the California coast

Host Agency: Maryland Chesapeake and Coastal Program

Location: Annapolis, Maryland

Project Goal: Target tools and techniques for sea level rise adaptation and response

Host Agency: New Jersey Coastal Program

Location: Trenton, New Jersey

Project Goal: Establish a comprehensive coastal resilience index for New Jersey's Delaware Bayshore

Host Agency: Oregon Coastal Management Program

Location: Portland, Oregon

Project Goal: Construct a diked lands vulnerability inventory to support strategic planning for the impacts of sea level rise

Host Agency: Wisconsin Coastal Management Program

Location: Madison, Wisconsin

Project Goal: Build a Great Lakes spatial decision-support toolbox to address comprehensive plan implementation and coastal hazards resilience

If you would like more information about the 2009 state projects, please visit the fellowship website at www.csc.noaa.gov/fellowship/ or contact the fellowship coordinator at csc.fellowships@noaa.gov.

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

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UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

JANUARY

22 to 24: **8th Annual New Partners for Smart Growth Conference: Building Safe, Healthy, and Livable Communities**
Albuquerque, New Mexico
www.newpartners.org/index.html

FEBRUARY

24 to 26: **2009 Ocean and Coastal Program Managers' Meeting**
Washington, D.C.
www.coastalmanagement.noaa.gov/pmm/welcome.html

MARCH

2 to 5: **Coastal GeoTools 2009 Conference**
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina
www.csc.noaa.gov/geotools/

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

NOAA COASTAL SERVICES CENTER TRAINING

CanVis Virtual Workshop (via WebEx)
January 21, 2009
February 18, 2009
March 18, 2009

Negotiating for Coastal Resources
March 5 to 6
Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve

Public Issues and Conflict Management
March 3 to 4
Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve

Coastal Community Planning and Development
January 19 to 20
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Smart Growth Program

March 10 to 12
Indiana Department of Environmental Management

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

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