



2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter: May 1 – July 31

Greetings,

The Gulf Watch Alaska program has sailed through another quarter. Field work was the dominant theme this quarter, which started out blustery and cool in May and early June but warmed up in July. Cordova is still a rainy spot! Here is a brief summary of our program's summer activities and accomplishments:

### **Science Update:**

- Reports from the field:
  - *Environmental Drivers Component* - Prince William Sound (PWS), GAK1, Seward Line, lower Cook Inlet, and Continuous Plankton Recorder projects completed spring and summer oceanographic surveys. Complementary NSF-funded long-term ecological research (LTER) Seward Line and expanded transects were also completed. Initial observations indicate that climatology seems to be returning to pre-blob levels. The spring bloom appeared early this year across all regions.
  - *Pelagic Ecosystems Component* - marine bird surveys in PWS and on Middleton Island are ongoing. In addition, bird observers are on the summer Seward Line and complimentary LTER surveys (NSF funded) in the northeastern Gulf of Alaska. Killer whale surveys so far show slow activity in PWS but the Kenai Fjords area seems normal. More killer whale surveys are planned for August. Humpback whale-forage fish-seabird surveys in PWS will occur in September.
  - *Nearshore Ecosystems Component* - the nearshore team completed all nearshore surveys in PWS, Kenai Fjords, Kachemak Bay, and the Katmai coast. Work included aerial sea otter surveys in the Katmai area and initiating sea otter, marine bird, and black oystercatcher surveys in Kachemak Bay. Scientists observed juvenile sea stars, primarily sun stars (*Pycnopodia helianthoides*), at multiple sites; none displayed signs of sea star wasting.

### **Program Management Team:**

- In preparation for the field season, the program management team provided principal investigators key materials and contact information for networking with the [Marine Mammal Stranding Network](#) and the [Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team](#) (COASST) Die Off Alert (DOA) program to expedite reporting and collection of samples if needed.
- The team has been busy helping get program and project work plans drafted for FY19 and submitted to the Trustees by August 17th.

### **Data Management:**

- Axiom completed FY12-16 data publication to DataOne at the end of July. This includes data such as information from zooplankton samples that take longer to process and required additional time following collection to be finalized and published.
- Axiom continues efforts to transfer historical data retrieved by the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis to its DataONE node.

### **Outreach:**

- Gulf Watch Alaska teamed with the Kachemak Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve to

conduct local knowledge exchanges with Alaska Native community members in Port Graham, Seldovia, and Nanwalek.

- In Port Graham, Kris Holderied, Ben Weitzman, Brenda Konar, Katrin Iken, and Donna Aderhold (from GWA), and Maya Groner (from Herring Research and Monitoring) participated in the knowledge exchange, discussing sea stars, warm water, and changes in salmon behavior and health.
  - Robb Kaler and Donna Aderhold (GWA) participated in the Seldovia event, which was focused on COASST DOA training. Robb presented information on the common murre die-off in the Gulf of Alaska, including current analysis efforts into the causes, and Donna answered questions about the local common murre? die-off in Kachemak Bay.
  - The Nanwalek engagement was postponed until fall due to unforeseen circumstances.
- Robert Skorkowsky, District Ranger for the Cordova Ranger District of the Chugach National Forest, joined the Outreach Steering Committee as a conduit for strong program connections between GWA and the United States Forest Service.

***Relevant Media:***

- Gulf Watch Alaska researcher Kris Holderied, with the NOAA National Centers of Coastal Ocean Science and Kasitsna Bay Lab, is collaborating with many partners to study the bay ecosystem, monitor invasive species, and develop risk assessment tools within Alaska's Kachemak Bay Habitat Focus Area. Watch the newly released video highlighting these efforts [here](#).

***2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Products:***

- All Gulf Watch Alaska 5-year Final Reports (21) have been accepted by the EVOSTC science coordinator and ARLIS Librarian. These reports are discoverable on our public website ([Resources - Reports](#)) and will be on the EVOSTC and ARLIS websites in the near future.
- Our Gulf Watch Alaska summer quarter Principal Investigator teleconference was held July 9, 2018.

***Important Upcoming Dates (2018):***

- FY19 Work Plans due to the EVOSTC **August 17, 2018**
- EVOSTC Public Advisory Meeting **September 26, 2018**
- EVOSTC Trustees Meeting **October 17, 2018**
- FY18 Gulf Watch Alaska Annual Program Meeting, Anchorage, **November 14-16, 2018**

***Gulf Watch Alaska quarterly photo with Haiku:***

**Haiku**

Spring low tides expose  
Clams for hungry bears  
Scientists make it easy



The Nearshore crew had some unexpected volunteers helping “sample” clams on the Katmai coast.