



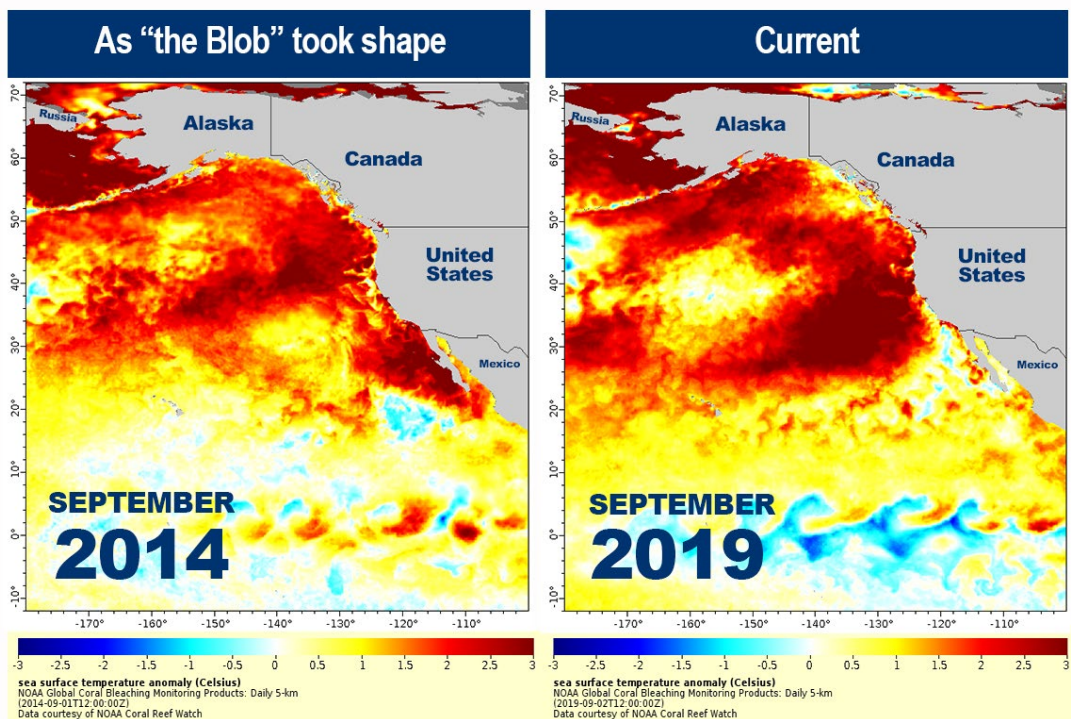
3rd Quarter: Aug. 1, 2019 - Nov. 1, 2019

Greetings!

The Gulf Watch Alaska (GWA) program has wrapped up a robust summer sampling season from Middleton Island, Prince William Sound, Kenai Fjords, Kachemak Bay, and the Katmai coast--with some of our efforts continuing into fall and winter. In early October we held our annual Principal Investigators meeting in Homer, Alaska, with approximately 40 attendees. This meeting provides important facetime between investigators for discussions on their recent findings and setting goals for the next year. Yes, it was a highly productive gathering of science nerds. Here is a brief summary of our program's third quarter activities and accomplishments:

Science Update:

- Since most of our Principal Investigators are now out of the field, crunching data, and preparing for our science synthesis report and manuscripts, this update is a retrospective of our scientific products in the past year. Program investigators produced 18 ecosystem indicators for the annual Alaska Ecosystems Status Report, 5 peer reviewed publications, 15 manuscripts in prep, and one PhD dissertation. Since the beginning of the program in 2012, more than 90 papers have been published in peer reviewed journals.
- *Of Note* - In case you were wondering, a topic that dominated investigator discussions at the annual meeting was the Pacific marine heatwave (The Blob) which began in 2014, persisted through 2016, had a temporary hiatus in 2017, and returned in late 2018 through 2019. The graph below is from a [recent article by NOAA Fisheries](#) on the status of the marine heatwave. This marine heat wave is the theme for the GWA FY2020 science synthesis report to the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC).



A comparison of the Pacific marine heatwave shown in September 2014 and 2019 (NOAA Fisheries).

Program Management Team (PMT):

- The GWA Program Management Team coordinated with all Principal Investigators in a timely submittal of FY20 work plan proposals to the Trustees in August. We worked with the *Exxon Valdez* Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC) staff regarding budget requests related to several projects, responded to questions from the EVOSTC Science Review Panel, and presented an overview of the program to Trustees during their annual meeting.
- GWA's Program Lead gave a presentation about GWA and their ecosystem indicator contributions to the [North Pacific Fisheries Management Council at their October 2019 meeting](#) in Homer, Alaska.
- The GWA program held its annual Principal Investigators meeting October 8-9 in Homer. GWA Program Management Team and Principal Investigators participated in the [Herring Research and Monitoring program](#) annual meeting held October 10 also in Homer.

Data Management:

- The Data Management Team met in one-on-one meetings with GWA Principal Investigators at the annual meeting to discuss annual updates and curation of remaining data from 2018 and 2019 seasons.
- Final 2018 data are made available to the public through the [AOOS Gulf of Alaska data portal](#).

Outreach:

- The GWA Program Leader, Science Coordinator, and Principal Investigators presented information about the program, projects, and syntheses in progress at the Kachemak Bay Campus of Kenai Peninsula College, University of Alaska Anchorage as part of the campus' [Public Square series](#) during the GWA annual meeting. An engaged crowd asked lots of great questions and comments. Among numerous topics, individuals asked about the status of injured resources and lingering oil, what may be ahead for fishery declines and seabird mortalities with renewed warm temperatures, and about the potential for harmful algal blooms and what that means for mariculture and recreational shellfish harvests.
- Members of the public and researchers not directly involved with EVOSTC-funded projects attended portions of the GWA annual meeting in Homer, including several seabird biologists with the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, members of community councils and boards of organizations based in the spill-affected area, and long-time Homer residents with memories of the spill.

Relevant Media:

- The Prince William Sound Science Center published a [web update on marine temperature anomalies](#) based in part on data collected for the GWA program.
- Seattle Aquarium Animal Care Specialist [Caroline Hempstead blog](#) - details her collaborative research in Alaska and with the GWA program.
- A new study shows [Arctic Cod Development, Growth, Survival Impacted by Oil Exposure](#).

Important Upcoming Dates:

- **December 1, 2019** - Draft science synthesis reports due to EVOSTC staff
- **January 27 - 31, 2020** - [Alaska Marine Science Symposium](#) (GWA will hold meeting during AMSS)
- **February 25 - 27, 2020** - EVOSTC Synthesis Workshop
- **March 1, 2020** - FY19 annual reports due to EVOSTC staff

Gulf Watch Alaska quarterly photo:



Smile and say science nerds! Group photo at the GWA annual Principal Investigators meeting, Alaska Islands & Ocean Visitor Center, Homer, Alaska.