



1<sup>st</sup> Quarter: Feb. 1, 2020 - April 30, 2020

Greetings!

Wow, things have certainly changed since the last installment of the *GWA Quarterly Currents*. The first quarter of monitoring year 8 was dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic washing ashore in Alaska, which resulted in federal/state agency closures and restrictions from State of Alaska mandates for physical distancing. Most GWA team members shifted to working from home and developing contingency plans for postponing or in some cases cancelling field surveys. Let's just say the suggestion of losing data is not easily accepted by principal investigators who are passionate about their research and have spent their whole careers nurturing legacy time series. Therefore, a great deal of effort is currently being put into creative "plan Bs and Cs". However, since the GWA program has diverse partnerships, not all data collection has been affected this season and the program continues with some successes not experienced by other researchers and organizations. Here is a brief summary of our program's first quarter activities and accomplishments:

### **Science Update:**

- The GWA program submitted a science synthesis report to the EVOSTC in December 2019. As a follow-up, the program presented and discussed the findings of the report in a workshop with the Council's Science Panel on February 27, 2020 in Anchorage. Lead authors of each chapter in the report (4 manuscripts destined for peer reviewed science journals) presented their findings and had Q & A with the Science Panel. Additional presentations by the program lead and Council's Science Director set the stage for valuable discussions about the program's progress and direction in the future. The GWA program greatly appreciates all the effort that went into organizing the workshop, the attention given by the Science Panel members, and the thorough review of the scientific products.
- Survey success! Amidst the quickly implemented mandates and requirements for physical distancing, several GWA projects continued. The Seward Line developed measures to conduct oceanographic surveys in the Gulf of Alaska and Prince William Sound that were acceptable to the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the National Science Foundation. Three scientists performed a subset of the work typically conducted by a large team aboard the *R/V Sikuliaq* in early May (*see relevant media below*). Additional oceanographic sampling in Prince William Sound by the Prince William Sound Science Center and the Gulf of Alaska by the Continuous Plankton Recorder studies also proceeded with minimal delays. Seabird studies on Middleton Island by the Institute for Seabird Research and Conservation also resumed uninterrupted this spring.

### **Program Management Team (PMT):**

- The PMT successfully planned and coordinated presentations for the Trustee Council's science synthesis workshop including a program overview and tour of GWA's public website to the Public Advisory Committee (PAC). The Data Management program also organized Axiom staff to give guided tours at computer terminals for each PAC member so they could discover the plethora of data being collected by the Council's programs and how this information is made available to the public online.
- In addition to science synthesis activities, the PMT submitted all annual reports (project and program) to the EVOSTC. The reports are under review by the EVOSTC Science Director and will

be finalized based on comments early in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter.

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the GWA PMT has focused on helping principal investigators prioritize and make the tough decisions on data collection and budgetary options.
- The environmental drivers component began work on a graphic that will complement the graphics developed for the nearshore and pelagic components. The graphics are intended to help the public understand the complex systems of the Gulf of Alaska ecosystem.

#### **Data Management:**

- Data from the GAK1 mooring are available through the Gulf of Alaska data portal for visual data access and download ([LINK](#)). Data are marked with quality control flags following the Real-Time Oceanographic Data Quality Control Flags (QARTOD) methods. Flags can be explored visually within the data portal or downloaded with the data package.
- GWA researchers continue to meet deadlines for data sharing deliverables. 75% of the 2019 datasets are finalized with metadata and available in the Research Workspace for sharing among project collaborators.

#### **Outreach:**

- The GWA website continues to be updated with latest news and updates as a primary outreach tool for the program: <https://www.gulfwatchalaska.org/>.
- Project pages on the website were updated by principal investigators with the latest results through the 2019 field season.

#### **Relevant Media:**

- What It's Like to Social Distance at Sea. A skeleton crew braves the first research cruise since the pandemic began. <https://eos.org/articles/what-its-like-to-social-distance-at-sea>
  - Duncombe, J. (2020), What it's like to social distance at sea, *Eos*, 101, <https://doi.org/10.1029/2020EO144098>. Published on 12 May 2020.
  - Grove, C. Pared down Sikuliaq sailing in Gulf of Alaska maintains research streak. Alaska Public Media - Anchorage -May 5, 2020. *Radio*. <https://www.alaskapublic.org/2020/05/05/listen-pared-down-gulf-of-alaska-sailing-maintains-sikuliaqs-research-streak/>.
- 20th year of North Pacific Continuous Plankton Recorder (CPR) sampling featured at PICES meeting and highlighted in their winter newsletter ([vol 28, no 1](#)).
- Hungry Alaska bears find a new prey: Katmai's sea otters.
  - Full article published by Hakai Magazine: <https://www.hakaimagazine.com/news/hungry-alaskan-bears-find-a-new-prey/>.

#### **New Publication Highlights:**

Bowen L, Counihan KL, Ballachey B, Coletti H, Hollmen T, Pister B, Wilson TL. 2020. Monitoring nearshore ecosystem health using Pacific razor clams (*Siliqua patula*) as an indicator species. *PeerJ* 8:e8761 <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.8761>.

Campbell, R. W., P. L. Roberts, and J. Jaffe. 2020. The Prince William Sound Plankton Camera: a profiling *in situ* observatory of plankton and particulates. *ICES Journal of Marine Science*. fsaa029. <https://doi.org/10.1093/icesjms/fsaa029>.

Schaefer, AL, Bishop, MA, Thorne, R. Marine bird response to forage fish during winter in subarctic bays. *Fish Oceanogr.* 2020; 00: 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fog.12472>.

***Important Upcoming Dates:***

- **May 2020** - submit final drafts of all GWA FY19 Annual Reports
- **May/June** - submit responses to the Trustee Council Science Panel comments of science synthesis report and final draft
- **August 14, 2020** - FY21 Work Plans due to EVOSTC

***Gulf Watch Alaska quarterly photo:***



*Social distancing at sea - Seth Danielson handles equipment for a plankton net tow in front of an empty deck on the 261-foot R/V Sikuliaq. April 2020. Credit: Ethan Roth.*