



Greetings,

The Gulf Watch Alaska (GWA) program continues to forge ahead. The program submitted FY19 Work Plans to the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council (EVOSTC) in August and recommendations by the Science Review Panel, Science Coordinator, Public Advisory Committee, and the Trustees were to fully fund all projects including some additional unfunded needs. This long-term ecosystem level monitoring program stands out as a hallmark for Alaska providing a wealth of information to the scientific community, resource managers and the public. We greatly appreciate the EVOSTC support and positive feedback. Here is a brief summary of our program's third quarter activities and accomplishments:

Science Update:

- GWA investigators contributed 16 time series indicators to NOAA's 2018 Ecosystem Status Report (a two-fold increase from 2017). The indicators are used by the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council when evaluating commercial harvest decisions in an ecosystem-based fisheries management framework.
- The program had several projects out conducting surveys this fall. Oceanographic surveys were conducted in Kachemak Bay, Prince William Sound (PWS), the Seward Line, and the extended Long Term Ecological Research (LTER) collaborations out on the northeastern Gulf of Alaska shelf. The integrated predator-prey surveys (humpback whales, forage fish and seabirds) were conducted in PWS along with killer whales throughout the Sound and Kenai Peninsula. Overall observations were that oceanographic conditions in the upper water column are trending back toward baseline, but biological indicators ranging from zooplankton to whales are lagging, including warm water species still present, generally low abundance, and reduced reproductive output.

Program Management Team:

- Members of the GWA management team attended the EVOSTC's Public Advisory Committee Meeting in September and the Trustee Councils meeting in October. The program leads for GWA and the Herring and Research Monitoring program gave presentations to the Trustees on their programs' progress.
- As in years past, the Trustee Council's Science Panel and Science Coordinator reviewed the annual work plans and sent comments/questions back to the GWA program and project principal investigators. Our management team compiled all responses and returned them to the reviewers. This is an especially meaningful exercise to go through and ensure that the best possible science is being conducted.
- The GWA Program Management Team made arrangements for the annual principal investigators meeting and developed an agenda for the multi-day event focused on science syntheses. During this time when all the scientists are together, additional workgroups convene to discuss specific topics (e.g. compiling datasets).

Data Management:

- The Data Management Team (DMT) has been developing a next generation version of the Gulf of Alaska data portal, which offers users with feature updates and enhancement to searching, visualization, and customizable views for creating comparison charts across different data types. The new portal version is planned for release in December 2018 at: <https://portal.aos.org/gulf-of-alaska>

- The DMT continues to work with GWA researchers to finalize curated project datasets for the 2017 season. These datasets will be publically available in early 2019 through the Gulf of Alaska data portal.

Outreach:

- [Gulf Watch Alaska's public website](#) continues to be updated providing information and resources on the program, individual projects, and outreach.
 - See the Nearshore Component and National Park Service's [2018 Resource Briefs](#).
 - Reports from the first 5 years of monitoring, [2012-2016](#), are complete and available on the program's website.

Relevant Media:

- [In Alaska, Starving Seabirds and Empty Colonies Signal a Broken Ecosystem](#), Audubon news article online, Sept. 21, 2018.

Products:

- All FY19 Work Plans (Program and 12 project work plans) were completed and submitted to the EVOSTC in August 17, 2018.
- A semi-annual report was submitted to NOAA's Grants Online by the PWS Science Center at the end of August.

Important Upcoming Dates:

- **November 14-16, 2018** - FY18 Gulf Watch Alaska and Herring Research and Monitoring Annual Principal Investigator Meetings, Anchorage
- **Week of January 28th** - 2019 Alaska Marine Science Symposium
- **Monday, January 28th** - 2019 AMSS GWA meeting

Gulf Watch Alaska quarterly photo:



Kachemak Bay seasonal sampling – getting ready to deploy snow covered CTD (photo by Angie Doroff)