



FELLOW NEWS

News for and about the NOAA Fellows

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WHAT'S NEW

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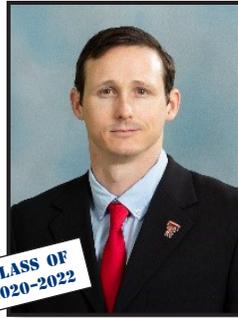
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Spring 2022, Issue 91



FOCUS ON FELLOWS

BRIAN DESANTI



Fellow Brian DeSanti grew up on Florida's Space Coast in the City of Rockledge, and he remembers spending most of his childhood on the beach. Later, time spent studying the coast and working on coastal issues cemented his chosen career path.

Brian's academic bona fides include a bachelor's in marine science from Florida Gulf Coast University; a master's in biological oceanography from Florida State University; and both a master's in natural

resource management and a doctorate in mass communications from Texas Tech University. It was someone at Texas Sea Grant who suggested Brian apply to the NOAA Fellowship after reading his Knauss Fellowship Program application.

Nominated by Texas Sea Grant, Brian was matched with the Texas Coastal Management Program, part of the state's General Land Office. Mostly, he splits his time between Texas Beach Watch, which updates state residents and visitors on water quality and safety conditions at recreational beaches, and Clean Coast Texas, which helps communities protect coastal water quality.

For Texas Beach Watch, Brian evaluated the program and recommended various improvements, which he describes as a "fun and challenging process." Along the way, he reviewed similar programs in coastal states, completed audits of lab analyses and field crews, worked with contractors, and conducted sampling of the state's largest beach area.

Brian's recommendations are now included in the quality assurance plan. "It includes new sites to monitor, new equipment for field measurements, a more intuitive field sampling form, and language and process updates, all of which have been accepted and are awaiting approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency," he notes.

The Clean Coast Texas collaborative is an incentive-based program "that started just as I arrived, and there were challenges in bringing multiple partners together under one brand," says Brian, who coordinated and conducted outreach, served as a biological expert, and tracked work among the groups.

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Office for Coastal Management

Brian visiting St. Croix.



Brian helped partners come together on the branding theme and messaging, partly through holding webinars on coastal topics where attendees were allowed to ask questions of experts. “Working on the project management side has been one of the most challenging and rewarding activities of this fellowship. It was outside of my comfort zone, and it felt good to become proficient at it—enough so that I am working on getting certified in project management,” Brian says.

When not at work, Brian enjoys exploring outdoor areas. Two years of the pandemic gave him the opportunity to explore much of the Texas Hill Country.

Playing board games with friends is also a favorite pastime.

Brian appreciates how the fellowship has enabled him to use his educational skills in real-world situations. He has also honed his science communication skills and built relationships with others who have a stake in the coast’s well-being.

As for life after the fellowship, “I am not tied to any geographic area, although I prefer warm environments,” notes Brian, adding, “my professional plans are to continue making a positive impact in our coastal environments.” *fi*

CLASS OF
2020-2022



FOCUS ON FELLOWS NICOLE MARKS

Fellow Nicole Marks grew up in rural Gardners, Pennsylvania. Her fascination with the environment goes all the way back to childhood days spent playing in the woods and a creek near her home. Family vacations at the New Jersey shore sparked in Nicole a love for the coast, as well as a desire to make protection of natural resources part of her future career path.

Graduating with a bachelor’s degree in biology and a minor in Spanish from Juniata College in Pennsylvania, Nicole pursued her career interests right away. She served as a marine and environmental monitoring technician for AmeriCorps at Washington State’s Department of Ecology. Afterwards, she worked as a salmon management technician for the state’s Department of Fish and Wildlife. Several years after college graduation, Nicole obtained a master’s in environmental science from Villanova University in Pennsylvania.

Nicole helping scientists at the Delaware National Estuarine Research Reserve with a marsh biomonitoring study.



Alerted to the NOAA Fellowship by a graduate advisor, Nicole applied, was nominated by Pennsylvania Sea Grant, and was matched with the Coastal Programs Section at the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control.

An interactive tool (the Individual Adaptation Decision and Planning Tool, or I-ADAPT) that Nicole has created makes use of spatial data and user-sourced information to help Delawareans adapt to the more frequent and intense flooding influenced by climate change. The tool, which takes physical and personal factors into account, offers tailored recommendations that users can put in place right now on their property, and actions that will

likely help at a later date, to lessen flooding risks through 2050.

“It is refreshing to work on a project that helps at-risk residents directly,” says Nicole, whose previous work and studies have focused mostly on scientific research. A website will house the tool, as well as documents on recommended adaptation strategies. She also has assisted scientists and planners in Delaware Coastal Programs with other work, including horseshoe crab studies, environmental justice projects, and other resiliency projects.

On her fellowship opportunities, Nicole is enthusiastic. “I have been able to present at several national conferences, increase my network, and attend many professional development trainings,” she says,

adding, “I’ve also broadened my skill sets in spatial analysis, project management, outreach, design, and governmental processes.”

When not at work, Nicole savors the chance to hike and camp with her husband. “I’m not much of a winter person,” she admits, so when the temperature dips, she enjoys reading novels or savoring a beer with friends.

When the fellowship ends, Nicole sees two potential careers paths that would be very appealing. One would involve using her geospatial analysis skills to help acquire lands or waters for a conservation nonprofit. Another exciting path could be working for NOAA or another federal agency to analyze how human activities affect aquatic environments. [fit](#)

FELLOW NEWS IS GETTING A NEW LOOK!

Keep an eye out for our summer issue of *Fellow News*, which will introduce our 12 new 2022-2024 Coastal Management and Digital Coast fellows, and will bid farewell to our 2020-2022 fellows.

Then stay tuned for a new look and feel of *Fellow News* starting in the fall of 2022! We'll still feature our amazing fellows and give updates on the program, but we will do it in a new and improved format! [@](#)

UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

JUNE

7 to 9: **Capitol Hill Ocean Week**
Washington, D.C., and Virtual
marinesanctuary.org/chow-2022/

JULY

19 to 21: **National Working Waterfront Network Conference**
Boston, Massachusetts
nationalworkingwaterfronts.com/current-conference

OCTOBER

25 to 27: **National Adaptation Forum**
Baltimore, Maryland
nationaladaptationforum.org

NOAA OFFICE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT TRAINING

JUNE

15: Virtual – Social Science Basics
[Live Webinar](#)

15 to 16: Virtual – Facilitation Basics for Coastal Managers
[Live Webinar](#)

21: Funding and Financing Coastal Resilience
[Live Webinar](#)

29: Virtual – Facilitation Basics for Coastal Managers
[Live Webinar](#)

AUGUST

24: Seven Best Practices for Risk Communication
[Live Webinar](#)

SEPTEMBER

14: Virtual – Facilitation Basics for Coastal Managers
[Live Webinar](#)

For more information on virtual and site-specific trainings, visit coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/training/home.html.

CREDITS AND INFORMATION

Fellow News is published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office for Coastal Management to relay information about the fellowship program and provide a forum for information exchange among fellows, mentors, Sea Grant, and the office.

Please send your questions and suggestions for future editions to ocm.fellowships@noaa.gov

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