



# FELLOW NEWS

News for and about the NOAA Fellows

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October 2011, Issue 51



## FOCUS ON FELLOWS Julia Noordyk



Coastal Fellow Julia Noordyk recalls the moment in grade school when she leafed through the pages of *In the Shadow of Man* and was riveted by Jane Goodall’s study of chimpanzees in the wild. Since then, her fascination with the natural world and drive to help protect it has guided many life decisions.

Growing up in Colorado near the popular Copper Mountain ski area, Julia and her family explored the outdoors year-round. In warmer weather the family camped in remote spots where fields of mountain flowers, and the occasional moose or coyote, came into view. In winter, Julia and her family were avid downhill skiers.

During her junior year as a zoology major at Colorado State University, Julia studied abroad in Tanzania. On a trip through the nation’s Eastern Arc rainforest, “we traveled through miles and miles of deforestation to arrive at only a small patch of preserved rainforest,” says Julia. The area’s people were cutting down the rainforest for heating and cooking fuel. “That’s when I realized we cannot just practice conservation in isolation—we have to link it to the social and cultural world.”

Following graduation, Julia worked at several environmental jobs and internships—most notably monitoring the California condor for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—but realized she needed to go back to school to pursue a full-time conservation career, so she enrolled at the University of Wisconsin–Madison for an M.S. in conservation biology and sustainable development.

A graduate exchange program in the South of France enabled

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Julia to study the effects of the invasive red swamp crayfish in the Camargue Delta, which fronts the the Mediterranean Sea. This crayfish is the same species commonly harvested and eaten in New Orleans.

“Europeans brought over the red swamp crayfish to fill a niche created by the overharvesting of native species, but the crayfish sort of took over the ecosystem, eating everything in its path and decreasing the populations of other species, like macroinvertebrates and amphibians,” says Julia. “Ironically, the crayfish are both a detriment and benefit to the ecosystem, because bird populations use them as a food source.”

In her work with the Maine Coastal Program, Julia is tackling two projects: providing offshore wind energy outreach and education, and building a public access guide, part of a larger, online Maine coastal atlas. The public access guide is slated to be online, and also in print, sometime in 2012.

Her two mentors are Matt Nixon, a senior planner and a former NOAA coastal fellow, and Kathleen Leyden, the director of the Maine Coastal Program. “Matt and Kathleen make a big effort to help me fit in and meet a lot of people, both within the agency and across agencies and organizations,” says Julia.



*Julia, accompanied by dog Nola on the Maine island of Isleboro, collects data for public access sites.*

Julia has just completed the seventh installment in a series of articles on offshore wind energy for *Commercial Fisheries News*. “My mentors have been critically important throughout the editing process,” notes Julia. “They’ve helped me to understand how to directly address the concerns of the fishing community related to offshore wind development in my articles,” she adds.

In her work on the public access guide, Julia recently collated a giant list of access points that will help residents and tourists find coastal public areas off the beaten path. She is directing three interns who are ground-truthing the data, taking photos, and collecting GPS points at the sites.

The guide will increase public access awareness and options

for Maine residents. “So much of coastal Maine is privately owned,” says Julia, adding that, out of approximately 5,300 miles of coastline, only about 35 miles are accessible to the public. “Public access is a very big issue for commercial fishers and others who make their living from the water, and it’s also important to people who want more access to outdoor recreation spots.”

Julia remains open about her career plans once the fellowship ends. “But one thing I’d like to continue doing is to work on bigger-picture issues, with a community focus,” she says. “I really like being part of a process where the concerns of the community meet up with federal, state, and developer decisions.” 

# FOCUS ON FELLOWS

## Kasey Jacobs



*“It is incredible how easily the feelings and memories of childhood come back to me when I am exploring coastal environments,”* says Coastal Fellow Kasey Jacobs, who works at the Puerto Rico Coastal Zone Management Program.

Kasey had just such an experience two months ago when on a snorkeling excursion off Puerto Rico’s coast with her brother. As they maneuvered above the seagrass beds and she pointed out nearby starfish and stingrays, she was suddenly “transported back to my eighth-grade field trip to Key Largo,” says Kasey. She recalled a life-changing week at MarineLab when “I saw a French angelfish, and I was completely in awe at how beautiful a fish could be. Until then the only fish I had seen came from local fishmongers. I also learned about the human activities impacting the ecosystems. That was it. I was sold on a career of

coastal and environmental science!”

Born on Long Island, New York, Kasey says she was a “water rat” and by eight years old had become a freestyler and backstroker on the community swim team. Her world was briefly upended in fifth grade when the family moved to South Florida. “To get me acclimated, my mother signed me up for a junior lifeguarding course, which was one of the best decisions she ever made for me,” notes Kasey. For six summers Kasey trained as a lifeguard, competed in lifeguard tournaments, and spent hours each day surfing, paddleboarding, and snorkeling.

Returning to New York State for her undergraduate education, Kasey obtained a B.S. from Southampton College in environmental science with a concentration in biology. Later, she attended the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies to complete her master of environmental science degree.

During graduate school, Kasey completed field research in disaster management and climate change adaptation in West Sumatra, a province of Indonesia on the island of Sumatra. She also interned with MercyCorps Indonesia, which enabled her to attend local meetings on disaster management.

As members of one of the last remaining matrilineal societies in the world, West Sumatrans accord women much decision-making power in property and financial matters. “During the disaster management meetings, the men would be the most vocal,” notes Kasey, “but the women are more ‘on the ground,’ so to speak—they are more personally prepared for disaster situations and more likely to follow up on tasks. Watching this process taught me that I cannot communicate effectively unless I understand the culture I’m in.”

In her fellowship position, Kasey is the coordinator of the Puerto Rico Coastal Adaptation Project, which has two aims: completing an island-wide vulnerability assessment for climate change and developing an adaptation strategy starting in 2010.

The Puerto Rico Climate Change Council, which is now being formed, will assess climate change impacts and recommend adaptation strategies. The expected outcome: user-friendly documents and outreach materials that address the adaptation needs of federal officials, local and commonwealth officials, nonprofit and civic organizations, and the private sector.

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*Kasey in the mountains of Puerto Rico*

Ernesto Diaz, the director of Puerto Rico's Coastal Management Program and Kasey's mentor, has used his impressive network to recruit more than 130 experts in various fields to the council. Because most are very busy,

it's Kasey's job to save them as much time and effort as she can. "I plan and facilitate working group meetings and edit and summarize the written information produced by the working groups to make these documents available for anyone on the council to use," she says.

Kasey has also launched the online Puerto Rico Climate Change Research Library. "Our partners can place any documents or materials in an electronic drop box, which I then organize by subject and make accessible to everybody," Kasey notes. "For instance, one folder contains all of the vulnerability assessments completed in the

U.S. and Latin America. We hope this folder will save time and help council members to create the vulnerability assessment for Puerto Rico."

Kasey has thoroughly enjoyed her fellowship so far. "Puerto Rico is an amazing place with beautiful people, and also some serious environmental problems. I'm open to different career paths after the fellowship. But it would really make me happy to combine community-based work, like the type I experienced in Indonesia, with the type of work I am doing for the fellowship in Puerto Rico, or somewhere else in the Caribbean." 

## FOCUS ON THE COASTAL FELLOWSHIP: Call for State Proposals

All U.S. states and territories with federally approved coastal zone management programs are eligible to submit one project proposal to compete for selection as a 2012–2014 fellowship host state. Multiple state agencies or organizations with partnered implementation of a state's coastal management program are also eligible. States that currently host a first-year fellow are not eligible to apply for a second fellow. This year, six project proposals will be selected.

A six- to eight-page proposal in 12-point font must include these sections:

- + Background and Introduction
- + Goals and Objectives
- + Milestones and Outcomes
- + Project Description
- + Fellow Mentoring
- + Project Partners
- + Cost-Share Description
- + Strategic Focus Area

Proposals are due to the NOAA Coastal Services Center by close of business on Friday, October 21, 2011. One signed original must be received through the mail, e-mail, or fax on this date (not postmarked, but received).

Proposals can be sent to

### **Coastal Management Fellowship Program**

c/o Jan Kucklick

NOAA Coastal Services Center

2234 South Hobson Avenue

Charleston, SC 29405

[csc.fellowships@noaa.gov](mailto:csc.fellowships@noaa.gov)

Fax: (843) 740-1224

To view examples of previously selected state proposals, visit the fellowship website at [www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/fellows/stateprojects.html](http://www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/fellows/stateprojects.html). 

# FOCUS ON THE CENTER

## Write Plainly for Maximum Impact

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“A government by the people and for the people should also be understood by the people.”

*Noel Brinkerhoff, writer and political journalist*

In October 2010, President Obama signed into law the Plain Writing Act of 2010 (Public Law 111-274), which directs federal agencies to communicate in concise prose that “avoids jargon, redundancy, ambiguity, and obscurity.”

Those of us who read or write agency prose at the local and state levels also need an occasional refresher on what “plain writing” looks like. Surrounded every workday by mind-bending sentences and an alphabet soup of acronyms, we sometimes forget the power—and rewards—of issuing simple, clear statements.

Here are a few tips to get us back in the habit of communicating with crystal clarity.

**Use a dynamic, active voice –** Compose active sentences as often as you are able. These sentences emphasize and join the subject and verb for a message that is clear, direct, and brief. **“The agency issued a beach advisory on Wednesday.”**

Active sentences also clearly assign responsibility to an

actor (“the agency issued”), providing the accountability and transparency your readers expect.

Passive sentences de-emphasize and separate the subject and verb, creating lengthier messages that are less direct.

**“A beach advisory was issued on Wednesday by the agency.”**

The worst passive-sentence offenders—consider the infamous “mistakes were made”—are likely to leave your readers with the impression that you are shifting responsibility and accountability. So include your “actor” in each sentence, even when describing complex projects. Subject phrases like, “local coastal officials,” or “members of the county’s disaster-reduction committee” can work.

**Keep your terms simple and straightforward –** An anonymous wit has described “bureaucratese” as the practice of “using big words to express little ideas.” Try to avoid slipping into bureaucratese and choose simpler messages instead: **Bureaucratese: “Upon receipt of this memo dated September 25, please be herewith informed that**

**our fishing license policy will be effectuated immediately.”**

**Better: “Our new fishing license policy takes effect on September 25.”**

**If you must use technical or little-known terms, explain –** If you have any doubt about whether your audience knows a term, include a brief, lay-friendly definition.

**Example: “Local waterfront areas are changing because of coastal inundation (a condition in which normally dry land is covered with water).”**

Avoid acronyms whenever possible and use full, spelled-out terms, because acronyms are almost guaranteed to confuse and alienate your audience. Even the full name of a program and agency can leave constituents with questions, so provide a thumbnail description.

**Example: “The U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System helps us collect, deliver, and use ocean information to protect the environment and enhance safety and the economy.”**

For more tips and tools on producing clear, concise communication, visit [www.plainlanguage.gov](http://www.plainlanguage.gov). 

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## UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

### OCTOBER

**13 to 16:** Rally 2011: The National Land Conservation Conference

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

[www.landtrustalliance.org/training/rally/](http://www.landtrustalliance.org/training/rally/)

For more information on upcoming events, please visit [www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/conferences.html](http://www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/conferences.html).

## NOAA COASTAL SERVICES CENTER TRAINING

### OCTOBER

#### Online:

**5:** Digital Coast Webinar: Community Resilience, Part II: Ecosystem-Based Adaptation Case Studies

**19:** CanVis Virtual Workshop

#### On-Site:

**3 to 4:** Coastal Inundation Mapping, Honolulu, Hawaii

**3 to 6:** Introduction to Coastal GIS, San Diego, California

**5:** Introducing Green Infrastructure for Coastal Resilience, Hardeeville, South Carolina

**5 to 6:** Project Design and Evaluation, Olympia, Washington

**5 to 6:** Public Issues and Conflict Management, Padilla Bay, Washington

**6:** Introducing Green Infrastructure for Coastal Resilience, Georgetown, South Carolina

**6 to 7:** Negotiating for Coastal Resources, Silver Spring, Maryland

**24 to 26:** Planning for Meaningful Evaluation, Portland, Oregon

**24 to 25:** Coastal Inundation Mapping, San Diego, California

### NOVEMBER

#### Online:

**2:** Digital Coast Webinar: Mapping and Visualizing Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding Impacts

**16:** CanVis Virtual Workshop

#### On-Site:

**15 to 16:** Planning for Meaningful Evaluation, Port Townsend, Washington

**17 to 18:** Planning for Meaningful Evaluation, Bellingham, Washington

### DECEMBER

#### Online:

**21:** CanVis Virtual Workshop

For more information on virtual and site-specific trainings, visit [www.csc.noaa.gov/training/](http://www.csc.noaa.gov/training/).

## CREDITS AND INFORMATION

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

Please send your questions and suggestions for future editions to [csc.fellowships@noaa.gov](mailto:csc.fellowships@noaa.gov)

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