



FELLOW NEWS

News for and about the NOAA Fellows

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October 2012, Issue 55



FOCUS ON FELLOWS

Wes Bickford



Coastal Fellow Wes Bickford's lifelong passion for the outdoors may well have begun on Lake James in Indiana's Steuben County, which boasts 101 lakes. Tooling along in the family boat, Wes found the swimming to be fine and the fishing even better. "The bluegill is especially good to eat, and even now my dad freezes his catch so my wife and I can have a nice bluegill dinner when we visit," he adds.

At Indiana University,

Wes chose to pursue a B.S. in environmental science but wondered whether he could master the hard sciences. Six weeks at a geology field camp in Montana proved to be a turning point. "I could see that environmental science offered a way to work outside, enjoy what I do, and stay challenged intellectually," he says.

On a six-month fellowship after graduation, Wes was placed with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management in Lewiston, Montana. His job was to visit government-owned property within cattle ranches and assess the health of rangelands by checking for evidence of problems such as overgrazing.

Most ranchers were proud of their land practices, and a few were skeptical of the young visitor. "I could see them thinking, 'Who is this guy from Indiana and what is he doing checking up on me?' And they had a point!" laughs Wes, who discovered he had better bone up on cattle ranching and learn to speak the ranchers' language. "Overall, it was a great way to learn some outreach skills."

Moving back to Indiana, Wes spent several months with a nonprofit that restored prairies and wetlands. One important restoration strategy was prescribed burns. He took part in 22 of them and says, "It's fun once you understand how fire works. I learned we could restrict fire from certain areas by using the wind to our advantage."

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Afterward, Wes decided to pursue an M.S. in environmental science and technology at the University of Maryland—College Park. One field project was a perfect fit—assessing the prescribed fire program at the Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge to analyze why fire promotes growth in some plants.

“This refuge has lost thousands of acres since the 1930s, so it’s sort of the poster child for wetlands loss,” notes Wes. “Researchers want to make sure prescribed fires are good for wetlands and do not lead to further loss. Our project found that the canopy removal from prescribed burns—and not the ash—was the chief factor in promoting plant growth.” Armed with this knowledge, land managers can ensure that prescribed burns provide the greatest benefit to these ecosystems.

Wes’ fellowship is with the Coastal Management Office of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. He gathers recreational-use data from ocean stakeholders that will support the ocean-use data portal for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO).

“This recreational-use information is stored in people’s brains, and our task is to get it out and mapped in a GIS,” says Wes. He credits NOAA’s Marine Protected Areas Center and Coastal Services

Center for training him in participatory mapping.

New Jersey’s outreach workshops, which are now being scheduled, will invite targeted user groups such as the fishing community, wildlife community, marine police, and others. Maps will be projected on a screen and participants will draw where specific types of recreation take place. The information will feed right into the GIS map database.

As GIS facilitator, Wes will ensure that the technical aspects of the meeting run seamlessly, the mappers are comfortable with the process, and the data are processed accurately. “Participatory mapping is going to increase buy-in and make people feel their voices are heard. Later on, if offshore wind development is considered,” he emphasizes, “the recreational uses are documented and will be protected.”

Wes is full of praise for mentor Dorina Frizzera, an environmental scientist. “She has introduced me to outside groups and estuary programs we work with, so they know my name and face.”

What would Wes like to do after the fellowship? “My master’s degree gave me scientific and technical skills, but the coastal management fellowship is providing me with great outreach experience. Ideally, I’d like to stay involved in science and wetlands work, but also with an outreach role.” 



FOCUS ON FELLOWS

Liz Durfee

Born in Massachusetts, Coastal Fellow Liz Durfee has always loved the ocean. But since graduate school she has resided in Michigan, and now Liz feels a great appreciation for the Great Lakes, sometimes called the nation’s “third coast.”

“When I look back, it’s hard to tease out my interest in environmental issues from my enjoyment of the outdoors,” says Liz, whose childhood memories include building forts in the woods and visiting family on Long Island Sound and Alaska’s Kenai Peninsula.

She does remember that an environmental conservation course at the University of New Hampshire solidified her professional interest in natural systems, sustainability, and environmental ethics. “I couldn’t imagine myself following

another career path,” says Liz, who completed a B.S. in environmental conservation.

At the University of Michigan, Liz completed two graduate degrees: an M.S. in natural resources and a master’s in urban and regional planning. She also had plenty of experience outside the classroom through internships and field trips. “Over the years, I’ve become more interested in coastal issues, because these are areas where fragile ecosystems and population centers overlap, and there’s a need for climate adaptation.” One memorable New Zealand study abroad program enabled her to learn about estuaries via kayak and hilltop observation.

For her fellowship, Liz is identifying the challenges and opportunities that confront the state’s working waterfront communities. She is also contributing to the development of a website of resources through the National Working Waterfront Network. In addition, Liz is developing a toolkit of resources for Michigan that will highlight different strategies communities are using to protect waterfronts and water-dependent uses. Liz works closely with both the Michigan Coastal Management Program and Michigan Sea Grant.

The state’s 3,200-plus miles of coastline have spawned many working waterfronts and a wide range of complex issues. “Wrapping

my head around ‘working waterfronts’ has been a challenge but also really interesting, because this issue is up and coming in Michigan and gaining a lot of attention at the national level.”

Liz and her colleagues are particularly interested in how land use along the waterfront is changing. “It’s important to safeguard current and future uses that depend on water access,” she notes. “Right now I am identifying coastal assets and water-dependent uses near the waterfront. I’m also noting how communities protect water-dependent uses through master plans and ordinances, for example.”

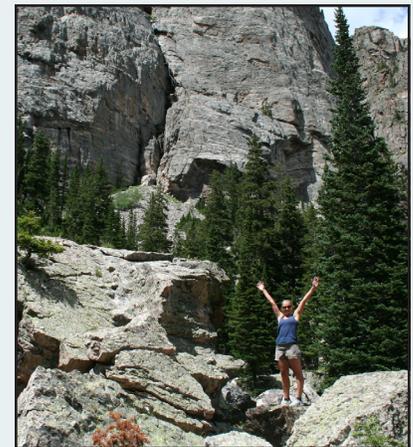
Liz also schedules community workshops and compiles recommendations for Michigan’s Waterfront Smart Growth Readiness Assessment Tool. This voluntary self-audit is taken by officials and stakeholders in waterfront communities during facilitated workshops. Participants rate the community’s performance on waterfront smart growth principles such as compact community design, the preservation of open space and natural beauty, community collaboration, and other factors. Later the community receives an objective score and written summary outlining its smart growth successes and suggesting potential areas of improvement.

The fellowship learning curve is sharp, but Liz has lots

of support. “My mentors Emily Finnell and Mark Breederland have helped develop my project, answered hundreds of questions, and let me tag along at meetings and conferences,” she says. Finnell is a senior environmental quality analyst for the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, and Breederland is an extension educator for Michigan Sea Grant.

Liz also acknowledges the Office of the Great Lakes and Michigan Sea Grant for introducing her to members of many coastal communities.

Where will Liz’ path lead once the fellowship ends? She is not sure, although “I want to stay involved in coastal planning and management. I’m interested in so many issues—working waterfronts, low-impact development, watershed planning, urban design, stormwater management, and climate adaptation. It’s all pretty fascinating.” 



Liz hiking in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado (Photo by Nate Haan)

FOCUS ON THE CENTER

OCEAN ENERGY PLANNING AND MARINECADASTRE.GOV



The national push to develop offshore wind energy infrastructure is a complicated process and ever-evolving. That's because the resources of the oceans and Great Lakes are shared by so many interests, such as coastal communities, renewable energy entrepreneurs, stewards of marine life and endangered habitat, and industries in shipping, fishing, and oil and gas extraction.

For several years now, MarineCadastr.gov has been a great help to everyone with a stake in the location of offshore wind energy sites. Co-developed by the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and the NOAA Coastal Services Center, MarineCadastr.gov features authoritative data sets with mapping information from 19 different federal and state agency partners. The following resources are available on www.MarineCadastr.gov:

- More than 140 authoritative ocean data layers, plus Web mapping services
- A national viewer and map gallery
- Offshore planning tools
- Technical support options
- Examples of how others are using the marine cadastre

The cadastre's data viewer allows users to customize marine maps—for instance, for measuring distances, noting marine boundaries and ownership information, or adding buffers around the areas of interest. It also simplifies and speeds up the ability of key players to address siting details and share data and maps. Here are just a few examples of on-the-ground uses:

- In North Carolina, spatial data and Web mapping tools on the cadastre are supporting wind energy planning.

- In California, maps of proposed wave energy projects were generated using data from the cadastre.
- In Massachusetts, data on vessel locations and density are helping a marine ecologist analyze how the noise of large commercial vessels may affect marine mammals.

“Serve once, use many times”—that's the Marine Cadastre motto. That motto is truer than ever now that users can get the latest information directly from 20-plus authoritative data layers, which are provided by NOAA's Office of Coast Survey and National Marine Protected Areas Center, and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management. As soon as these partners publish or refresh their data, the information is available to you.

The data sets address wind planning areas, marine protected areas, and outer continental shelf lease blocks, as well as renewable energy leases, exclusive economic zone and maritime boundaries, and active oil and gas leases. And much more.

Data and resources are regularly added to MarineCadastr.gov. To learn more, contact Jodie.Sprayberry@noaa.gov. 

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 2013–2015 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, up to 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 19, 2012. One signed original must be received through the mail, email, or fax on this date (not postmarked, but received). Proposals can be sent to

Coastal Management Fellowship Program
c/o Margaret Allen
NOAA Coastal Services Center
2234 South Hobson Avenue
Charleston, SC 29405
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.

NEED SOME HELP?
Put an order in for a Coastal Management Fellow.
Proposals from state coastal programs due in October.



 www.csc.noaa.gov/fellowship

WHAT'S NEW ON DIGITAL COAST?

Check out *Digital Coast Connections*, a new monthly e-newsletter. Coastal officials, managers, planners, and others read *Digital Coast Connections* to stay informed on the latest data sets, imagery, tools, and trainings provided by the Digital Coast Partnership and NOAA Coastal Services Center. Subscribing is easy at www.csc.noaa.gov/publications/subscriptions.html.

Digital Coast Connections incorporates two former newsletters into one monthly format, enabling the NOAA Coastal Services Center and Digital Coast Partnership to reach out more effectively and often to coastal professionals. See the debut issue at www.csc.noaa.gov/publications/dcc_pdfs/DCC_Aug2012.pdf. For more information, contact Kitty.Fahey@noaa.gov.

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UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

OCTOBER

**1 to 3: Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials
8th University Conference**

Duluth, Minnesota

www.nemonet.uconn.edu/u8

3 to 5: Great Lakes Sea Grant Network Meeting 2012

Duluth, Minnesota

www.seagrant.umn.edu/duluth2012

29 to November 1: 2012 Specialty

**Conference: Management Association for Private
Photogrammetric Surveyors and American Society
for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing**

Tampa, Florida

www.asprs.org/Conferences/Tampa-2012/blog

For more information on upcoming events, please
visit www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/conferences.html.

NOAA COASTAL SERVICES CENTER TRAINING

OCTOBER

Online:

10: Digital Coast Webinar: CanVis Presentation in Spanish

On-Site:

2 to 3: Public Issues and Conflict Management
Port Aransas, Texas

23 to 25: Introduction to Coastal GIS
Gautier, Mississippi

NOVEMBER

Online:

13: CanVis

14: Roadmap for Adapting to Coastal Risk

On-Site:

6 to 9: Coastal Inundation Mapping
Los Angeles, California

14 to 16: Climate Adaptation for Coastal Communities
Torrance, California

For more information on virtual and site-specific trainings, visit www.csc.noaa.gov/training.

DECEMBER

On-Site:

4 to 5: Public Issues and Conflict Management
Fort Myers, Florida

11 to 12: Project Design and Evaluation
Mount Vernon, Washington

13 to 14: Project Design and Evaluation
Tacoma, Washington

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

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