



FELLOW NEWS

News for and about the NOAA Fellows

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October 2013, Issue 59



FOCUS ON FELLOWS

Maggie Wenger



Growing up in what she jokingly calls “the great coastal state of South Dakota,” Maggie Wenger was no stranger to environmental issues, but as a midwesterner, her interest in the coast came later.

Maggie completed her undergraduate education at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in biology and environmental studies. However, it was during her time at the University of Michigan, while working toward a master’s in environmental policy and planning, that she was exposed to coastal issues. She had the opportunity to work with the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary in Washington State. Working with the Sanctuary Advisory Council and sanctuary staff members showed her how coastal issues brought together the environmental and social considerations she cared so much about. Around this time, she also heard about the fellowship program and thought it would be a great fit.

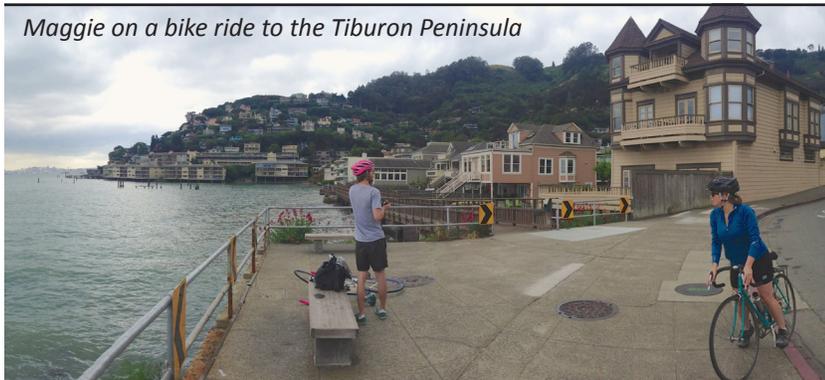
For her fellowship, Maggie is working with the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission on the Adapting to Rising Tides project, focusing on sea level rise adaptation in parks and recreational areas around San Francisco Bay. Maggie works with park managers to understand their sea level rise vulnerabilities and risks, then helps individual parks and the park systems develop adaptation responses. She has also worked with park interpretive staff members to develop sea level rise curriculum for their education programs.

The park managers she has worked with are now hosting their own sea level rise art competitions and public meetings to interpret sea level rise projections and risk for the public. Maggie has been very lucky to spend lots of days at shoreline parks with park managers and staff members, since she feels that a day by the bay almost always beats a day at the office. “The time I’ve spent in the field with managers

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Maggie on a bike ride to the Tiburon Peninsula



has helped me understand what constrains adaptation—whether that is a lack of information, limited resources, or site-specific constraints such as endangered species habitat or neighboring land uses,” notes Maggie.

At the end of her fellowship, Maggie will have developed an adaptation response report that includes vulnerability and risk as well as potential strategies for the East Bay Regional Park District. This report will help the park managers institutionalize their knowledge of past flooding events and prepare for the future.

For a separate piece of shoreline in Hayward, California, she is coordinating a working group to study the joint vulnerabilities of parks, utilities, and commercial land use along a major transportation corridor. The area has significant infrastructure behind low, unstable levees, and any solution to the levee issue will require complex land use arrangements to maintain habitat and human uses in the area. The study will help the working

group flesh out its possible paths forward to a resilient shoreline.

Maggie has enjoyed working as part of a large, established project because she can benefit from the experience and contacts of her co-workers. She has a lot of autonomy within the parks and recreation work, so she gets to scope projects, work with stakeholders, write final products, and present the work at public meetings and conferences.

After her fellowship, Maggie would like to stay in climate adaptation work along the coast. She enjoys the intersection of natural and human systems, and coasts are quite literally the frontlines for climate change adaptation. Maggie has thoroughly enjoyed her time in beautiful San Francisco and has taken advantage of the great public spaces in the Bay Area—both city parks and wilderness areas. She loves to bike to all the wonderful destinations San Francisco has to offer and just got back from backpacking in Desolation Wilderness. “California has spoiled me for nice weather and easy access to the woods,” says Maggie. TM

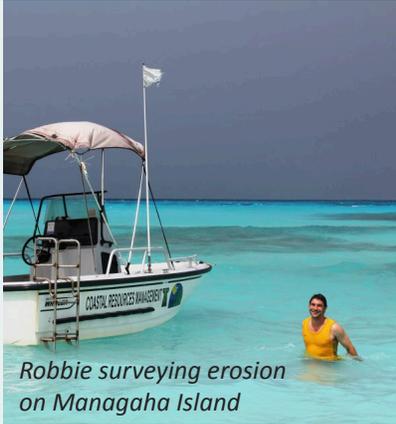


FOCUS ON FELLOWS

Robbie Greene

Fellow Robbie Greene grew up on the Chesapeake Bay, in Annapolis, Maryland. His interest in the coastal environment stems from a couple of recreational pursuits he had while growing up.

First, Robbie spent many childhood summers catching Chesapeake Bay blue crabs for both personal consumption and for sale (to his parents). He noticed both seasonal and annual changes in the quantity and quality of his catch and wanted to know why this occurred. Second, he is an avid surfer and in high school began to note relationships between the online buoy data from the NOAA National Ocean Service and the quality of surf at different beaches. The interaction between ocean conditions and shoreline



Robbie surveying erosion on Managaha Island

morphology became “a nerdy obsession of mine,” says Robbie.

Leaving the Chesapeake Bay behind for college, Robbie attended Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, where he majored in geography. He went on to complete the landscape architecture program at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. While in graduate school, he worked as a project assistant at Wisconsin Sea Grant. There he learned about the fellowship program by sharing an office with Wisconsin’s NOAA Coastal Management Fellow, Kathy Johnson. Despite her disappointment with the winter temperatures, she still seemed to be enjoying her project, and Robbie decided the fellowship might be a good fit for him too.

Robbie’s fellowship is with the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), and he is breaking ground by being the first NOAA Coastal Management Fellow to be placed there. His primary project is to lead the CNMI Climate Change Working Group (CCWG), and

to leverage resources from within this group and other external partners to develop a climate change risk and vulnerability assessment for CNMI.

“This project requires me to stay on my toes and wear several different hats on a daily basis. I design, coordinate, and facilitate the CCWG meetings, which have included participatory mapping workshops, stakeholder analysis exercises, and multi-day trainings from regional partners,” says Robbie. His final product will be a climate change risk and vulnerability assessment for the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, focusing primarily on sea level rise and impacts of coastal inundation on infrastructure and natural resources.

Robbie has also been able to work on other projects and responsibilities, including functioning as the program’s GIS specialist, writing grant proposals and budgets, supervising interns for field data collection and the development of a beach morphology atlas, and writing a monthly climate column for the “Ask a Scientist” section of the CNMI newspaper, *Marianas Variety*. He also enjoys validating the wave buoy that his office recently installed off the northwest side of the island of Saipan (an activity that he also calls surfing).

One of the things Robbie finds most gratifying is working in a small, close-knit island community

with limited resources. There is very little separation between professional working relationships and friendships outside the office. Important project collaborations and data leads often take shape as a discussion about saltwater intrusion at a weekend soccer game or a post-snorkel chat about coral bleaching. Folks come to embody the work they do, and because of the small scale on which projects are implemented, Robbie has been able to watch his work actually take form and fill a niche around the islands.

In the future, Robbie would like to continue researching and working with social and natural systems, and he would love to keep coastal processes as a specialty area. Providing climate adaptation services through a governmental body would be one avenue, but he might like to return to an academic research environment at some point.

“I’m not sure when I would pursue the latter, because I’m not too eager to give up snorkeling and surfing on pristine coral reefs during my lunch breaks,” says Robbie. “The CNMI may have spoiled me for life.” One thing he knows for sure—he would not trade this experience working on a small tropical island in the middle of the Pacific. “If I were caught daydreaming in the middle of class 15 years ago, this is probably what I was dreaming about.” 



FOCUS ON FELLOWS Kate Fleming

Fellow Kate Fleming has always had a concern for natural resources, but it took her a long time to realize she wanted to (and could) make a career of it.

While working for a public health association after earning her undergraduate degree in international affairs at George Washington University, she took a graduate-level course in environmental public health and was struck by how different her interests were compared to some other students. While they were all focused on the relationship between human health and the environment, she found herself more interested in the relationship between anthropogenic disturbances and ecosystem health.

At around the same time, Kate was traveling a lot for work and

visited the local aquariums any chance she got. After deciding that it was time to shift focus, she started looking for jobs that would give her more exposure to environmental and coastal issues. She landed a position as an outreach coordinator for a fisheries statistics program, and her plans for the future changed course.

Kate went back to school in New Zealand and Australia to earn her master's degree in conservation biology, which was issued jointly by Victoria University of Wellington and University of New South Wales. With a childhood as a "navy brat" living everywhere from Iceland to Japan, Kate felt comfortable attending school abroad. She then came back to the states to earn her master's in natural resources from Delaware State University. It was there that her advisor pointed out the fellowship program, and she felt it was a good fit.

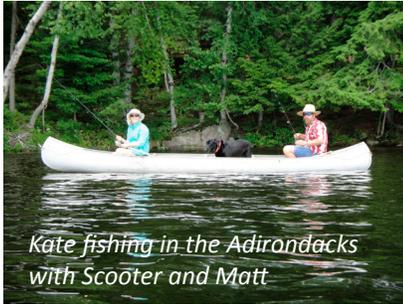
Kate's fellowship is with Delaware Coastal Programs, where she is working on the state's ocean planning project. She is working with stakeholders to develop data layers that display human uses spatially. Kate has spent the first half of the fellowship mapping recreational activities and commercial fishing, and she took the lead on implementing Delaware's Recreational Use

Mapping Workshop.

"Through the workshop, I not only captured recreational use information for our state waters but also captured recreational activities taking place in the Atlantic Ocean out to the exclusive economic zone," notes Kate. "These data will be combined with data collected by the other Mid-Atlantic states to create a seamless data set for regional ocean planning. Although challenging, it was pretty great to be able to contribute at that level early on in my fellowship."

The next step will be to have conversations with stakeholders to understand how these activities may conflict or co-exist with natural resources and with one another. She also supports ocean planning efforts that are taking place through the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean and the newly established Mid-Atlantic Regional Planning Body.

Because there are ocean planning efforts taking place throughout the region, she often gets to collaborate with partners from other states, federal agencies, nonprofits, and academia. "I've had so many opportunities to meet and work with people across the region, so I'm gaining experience working with different entities toward a common goal and making important



career-building relationships along the way,” says Kate.

When her fellowship is complete, Kate will have provided the state’s coastal professionals with spatial data layers that will aid decision-making by improving their understanding of human activities in Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. She will also complete a matrix that illustrates which activities and natural resources conflict and which are compatible.

Kate and her black labs, Scooter and Oatmeal, hope to stay in the Mid-Atlantic region after her fellowship to continue working on coastal issues and enjoying the beach outings and hikes that have become a staple for them. 

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 2014–2016 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 18, 2013. 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. 

WE ASKED...

We asked Robbie:

What’s the best or strangest message you’ve ever received from a fortune cookie?

“When I was 12 I received a fortune that stated, ‘Across the oceans and seas, the waves and the tides, an adventure awaits you far and wide.’ I kept this fortune in my wallet for several years before I lost the wallet over the side of a boat, but the message still resonates.”

We asked Maggie:

If you could have any super power, what would it be?

“I would like to be able to make it to work by 9:00 a.m. without drinking three cups of coffee. It hasn’t happened yet.”

We asked Kate:

What song or artist do you find yourself listening to a lot lately?

“I actually listen to a lot of podcasts instead of music, either on my way to work (I have a long commute) or while data processing—*This American Life* and *The Moth* are two of my favorites.”

NOAA Coastal Services Center
2234 South Hobson Avenue
Charleston, SC 29405-2413



UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

OCTOBER

27 to 31: National States Geographic Information Council 2013 Annual Conference

Kansas City, Missouri

www.nsgic.org/2013-annual-conference

27 to 30: Cartography and Geographic Information Society (CaGIS) and the American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) 2013 Specialty Conference

San Antonio, Texas

www.asprs.org/Conferences/San-Antonio-2013/blog

NOVEMBER

3 to 7: Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation (CERF) 2013 Conference

San Diego, California

www.sgmeet.com/cerf2013/

NOAA COASTAL SERVICES CENTER TRAINING

OCTOBER

On-Site:

1 to 3: Climate Adaptation for Coastal Communities

San Diego, California

29 to 30: Project Design and Evaluation

Melbourne, Florida

NOVEMBER

On-Site:

4 to 5: Navigating in Rough Seas: Planning and Facilitating Collaborative Meetings

Tallahassee, Florida

13 to 14: Project Design and Evaluation

Beaufort, North Carolina

13 to 14: Navigating in Rough Seas: Planning and Facilitating Collaborative Meetings

Robertsdale, Alabama

DECEMBER

On-Site:

3 to 4: Project Design and Evaluation

Olympia, Washington

10 to 11: Project Design and Evaluation

Venice, Florida

For more information on virtual and site-specific trainings, visit 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

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