

AOOS Board Meeting Summary
Spring Board Meeting
April 25, 2024
AOOS Conference Room

Board Members Present: Ginny Eckert (Alaska Sea Grant), Amy Holman (NOAA), Karen Smith (BOEM), Brad Moran (UAF CFOS), Lynn Palensky (NPRB), Wei Ying Wong (ASLC), Martin Robards (WCS), Steve White (MXAK), Katrina Hoffman (PWSSC), Meg Kohler (DEC)

Board Members Online: Jennifer Whitcomb (USCG), Mike Miller (IPCoMM), Cheryl Rosa (USARC)

Presenters: Rob Bochenek (Axiom), Hannah-Marie Garcia (ACSPI); Catherine Berchok (NOAA/AFSC)

AOOS staff: Sheyna Wisdom, Joni Spiess, Darcy Dugan, Jill Prewitt, Carol Janzen, Alice Bailey (online)

Guests online: Carl Gouldman, Ryhan Grech and Maria Murray (IOOS), Kristin Yarincik (IOOS Assoc)

Meeting called to order at 9:00am by AOOS Board Chair Katrina Hoffman

Adoption of Agenda and Meeting Summaries

- ***Requested Action:*** *Motion to approve draft meeting agenda, Sept 2023 Board Summary, and Feb 2024 ExCom summary. Motion by Holman, second by White. Passed unanimously.*

IOOS Program Office Update, Carl Gouldman (IOOS Director)

Carl provided an update on the IOOS budget and programmatic highlights. He acknowledged AOOS for hosting the upcoming IOOS fall meeting, championing animal telemetry network efforts, exhibiting leadership with the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) grants, providing technical assistance for smaller NGOs applying for grants, and expanding board representation for Alaska Native Organizations.

Carl touched on IOOS activities for FY24: Office of Technology Transfer (OTT) projects, high frequency radars (HFRs), glider work with the Navy, data management with Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funds, Coastal Ocean Monitoring Testbed (COMT) awards, modeling and cloud computing with a focus on open source, the National Ocean Biodiversity Strategy, and NHABON (harmful algal bloom awards).

The big topic of discussion at IOOS is the President's proposed FY25 budget which reflects a 75% decrease for IOOS. IRA funding provided a small boost to IOOS Regional Associations (RAs) in 2023 and a big boost in 2024, but this was for additional projects and not base funding. If the base funding is not available to support the IRA projects, those projects will be at risk. Carl has been working on communicating the role and benefits of IOOS RAs to senior officials in DC. He does not encourage regions to plan low-budget scenarios until the recommended budgets

from the House and Senate are released. The Alaska Congressional delegation has always been supportive of IOOS and AOOS.

IOOS Association Update, Kristen Yarincik

Kristen Yarincik, the IOOS Association Executive Director, gave an update on IOOS Association activities with a focus on appropriations. For context, the request last year for this year's funding for IOOS RAs was \$80.5M which included \$25.5M for infrastructure. The FY25 Request is \$56M which includes \$50M for core funding and \$6M for "innovation, priority initiatives and competitive grants" (e.g., NHABON, OTT, COMT).

The IOOS Association does not have to support the president's request and sent a letter to the Secretary of Congress that was widely circulated on the Hill. They are also circulating 2 sign-on letters, one that advocates for a specific funding level and another that's appropriate for federal partners. A CNN article also helped spread awareness and opened some doors on the Hill. They will also submit testimony to the House and Senate.

Board discussion:

- The president's budget doesn't match the president's voiced priorities with climate change. What messages might work, not just in Alaska but elsewhere? Carl noted that NOAA had its budget limit set and then had to fund some big ticket items (e.g., satellites) so they needed to trim other places and started with grant programs (IOOS is considered a grant program). The recent big boost of IRA funding received by IOOS influenced the decision as well. IOOS is trying to communicate that base funding is still needed to carry out the IRA projects.
- We need better outreach to NOAA nationally to improve the understanding of what we do. This is an opportunity and challenge to show what IOOS regions are accomplishing. Carl is working on the national level to highlight the power of the workforce the IOOS network creates and enables. Sometimes people don't see how initiatives are connected to support bigger issues. This is an opportunity to tell those stories.

Update on AOOS Activities by AOOS Executive Director, Sheyna Wisdom

Sheyna provided an overview of recent and upcoming AOOS activities and participation in state, national, and international level initiatives and reflections on the past year and coming year. (Details in board packet).

Board discussion:

- If AOOS is involved in internship programs, it can send youth to AOOS partners for exposure
- The Marine Exchange has interns and could fold AOOS interns into events/interactions with their intern program.
- AOOS could compile intern opportunities from partners on our website

Micropurchasing Thresholds

The Board discussed the annual approval of micropurchasing threshold approvals which streamlines procurement processes.

- **Requested Action:** Approve an increase of the micropurchasing threshold to \$50K. *Motion to approve an increase of the micropurchasing threshold to \$50K. Motion by White, second by Holman. Passed unanimously.*

AOOS Proposals

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). Sheyna reviewed the AOOS process for developing IRA the proposal over the last year and the contracts, subawards and other activities that were included in the proposal. The Board discussed the Southeast AK ecosystem mooring activities, and additional funds for water levels that will be forthcoming. The Board also noted that the investments that AOOS has made for over a decade into water levels are really paying off. NOAA and the State of Alaska will soon be in a position to move forward with true inundation mapping, which is only possible now with the past and current AOOS support.

- **Requested Action:** Approve budgets for IRA Topic Area 1 and 2. *Motion by Eckert, second by Kohler. Passed unanimously.*

Update on NOAA Cooperative Agreements

IOOS FY16-20 Agreement. AOOS has been operating under a No Cost Extension (NCE), which now ends in May 2024. The final report is due in July.

IOOS FY21-25 Agreement. AOOS is still waiting on final approval for Year 3 funds, which officially started July 1, 2023. Despite this, we have gotten approval from the IOOS Office to move forward with subawards. For Year 4 (starting July 1, 2024), AOOS staff are finalizing the work plan, but we do not expect this to be very different from Year 3. Sheyna will present the work plan to the Executive Committee for approval soon.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Subawards and activities for Years 1 and 2 are underway and an NCE is likely. The majority of the funds are being used to upgrade HFRs (Danielson/UAF) and passive acoustic moorings (Berchok/NOAA). We also received BIL funds towards Regional Ocean Partnership (ROP) which funded subawards that will be discussed this afternoon.

We are expecting the RFA for Years 3-5 of the BIL funds soon and will start developing work plans. We expect the yearly amounts to be roughly similar, however the ROP amounts may decrease in Years 4 and 5 if another ROP is established in the Lower 48.

NOAA OTT: Cook Inlet Operational Forecast System (CIOFS) Trajectory. This project was originally a COMT proposal that did not get funded and the components are being completed by piecing together various sources of funding, including this OTT grant. The project has now likely brought in more funds overall than the original COMT proposal.

NOAA Climate and Fisheries Adaptation (CAFA). This project began in December 2023, and workshops were held in Sitka and Kodiak this spring. In addition to the project goals related to discussion and adaptation, these workshops have also been helpful in identifying individuals in the fishing community who are interested in our programs and can provide insight/feedback on topics we engage on.

External Grants

NSF Convergence Accelerator. This project is the Backyard Buoys (BB) program (presentation in afternoon).

WWF/NPS Bering Strait Incident Response Tool. The WWF funding for this project has been closed out, and we are working on the last year of NPS funding. This project has been plagued by setbacks, especially the war in Ukraine. However, we continue to engage with NOAA, USCG, and OSROs such as Chadux to work on making the project as useful as possible for incident response.

EVOSTC Gulf Watch Alaska. AOOS is involved primarily with Carol as a project manager, however the funds for the data management are going directly to Axiom this funding cycle.

AC³TION Alaska Coastal Cooperative. Chris Maio is the PI of this project. The amount of funding to AOOS is small, but this is an important partnership and has many synergies with AWLW and BB.

Governance

The AOOS Board is welcoming three new members, replacing board members who have left.

- ***Requested Action:*** Approve Sharon Randall as the new BOEM representative, Wei Ying Wong as the new ASLC representative, and Jennifer Whitcomb as the new USCG representative on the AOOS Board.
Motion by Palensky, second by Holman. Passed Unanimously.
- ***Action Item:*** Sheyna will work on updating the “AOOS 101” presentation for new Board members and will schedule meetings with them.

Alaska Native Board Seat Update

Sheyna reviewed the interest and efforts leading to the expansion of the AOOS board to include more Alaska Native representation. A small working group of Mike Miller, Martin Robards, Sheyna Wisdom, Alice Bailey, Darcy Dugan, and Joni Spiess recommended that the AOOS Board add 4 seats from various ANO perspectives rather than geographical location, i.e., co-management organizations, for-profit ANOs (regional and village and CDQs), non-profit ANOs, authorized Tribal governments. Sheyna reached out via email and letters to as many entities as possible, received multiple inquiries and has met with 11 interested organizations.

The Board discussed the process of identifying individual organizations to add to the Board, including ensuring equity and transparency of the process, and whether the AOOS by-laws allowed for alternates.

- ***Action Item:*** Sheyna will 1) set a date for nominations to be received by AOOS, likely the end of May and 2) develop a proposed process to present to the Board. The goal is to seat new board members by October 1.

Program updates and from guests and staff

Hannah Marie Garcia from the Aleut Community of St. Paul gave an update on the Indigenous Sentinels and Skipper Science Programs.

Darcy Dugan on the AOOS staff gave an update on the Alaska Ocean Acidification Network and the Freezing Spray project

Catherine Berchok from NOAA's Marine Mammal Lab gave a presentation on passive acoustics.

Jill Prewitt on the AOOS staff gave an update on ROP and BIL projects which include Skipper Science, Sea Ice for Walrus Outlook, sea ice trail mapping through AAOKH, Sea Grant/outreach materials, Arctic Watch, and partnerships with the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP). She also talked about the AOOS Data Smack (internal working group), and Data Advisory Working Group (AOOS PIs).

Sheyna Wisdom provided an update on the Backyard Buoys project.

Rob Bochenek provided an update on data management and visualization, including a demonstration of real-time glider data from the Gulf of Alaska.

Upcoming Events & Board Expectations

Fall IOOS Meeting – Sep 3-5, 2024 in Juneau. AOOS will be hosting the Fall IOOS meeting and Sheyna encouraged Board members to attend. She noted that the hosting RA gets time to present work in their region and highlight partners. Plans will include a tour of the MXAK Operations Center, and likely other "field trips" as well. If Board members are interested please contact Sheyna.

AOOS 20th Anniversary. AOOS will be celebrating our 21st Anniversary in 2025. We will begin planning now and include any costs in our upcoming budgets. The Board discussed the activities that occurred during the 10 year anniversary including an event at Anchorage Museum with a keynote speaker, and a film contest. The anniversary was also highlighted at AMSS.

2026-2031 Cooperative Agreement. AOOS Staff are beginning to plan for the next IOOS Cooperative Agreement. Staff will discuss a process that will be presented to the Board this fall.

Ocean Observing Roundtable (items from Board members)

- Cheryl Rosa - There was a recent commission meeting at UAA; Mike Sfraga was re-nominated for Ambassador and is awaiting confirmation (will need new commissioner if so). UNOLS project on Arctic icebreakers; USCG design of icebreakers; USARC joint meeting with Canadian Arctic Commission; Arctic Energy Transition project.
- Hannah-Marie Garcia - The Aleut Community of St Paul is starting a research center, and receiving NSF funding for lab equipment to look at contaminants in subsistence foods. There is a 1-year grant to work on sustainability of the research center.
- Lynn Palensky - NPRB has the Northern Bering Sea IERP pre-proposal out, deadline May 15. They are still looking to fill several seats on the NPRB board.
- Wei Ying Wong - glad to be on the board and learn more about AOOS activities.
- Ginny Eckert - The Alaska Marine Policy Forum is a great venue for highlighting projects. The AK congressional delegation regularly attends. The May 15 forum will highlight Arctic Watch and the Alaska Arctic Observatory & Knowledge Hub
- Steve White - great to see AOOS out and about and involvement around the state.
- Katrina Hoffman - The NPFMC is hosting a workshop on fisheries and climate change on June 15. This is a difficult time for fishermen and information exchange is important. Katrina will share marine weather dashboard around Cordova. Check out the new Delta Sound Connections publication geared towards lay audience. AOOS has a 2 pg spread.

Next Meeting

The Fall AOOS Board meeting will be in the last 2 weeks of October. Watch for a poll.

Amy Holman motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Lynn Palensky. The motion was passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 4:35 pm.