**AOOS Board Meeting Summary**

**Fall Board Meeting**

**Sept 21, 2023**

**AOOS Conference Room**

Board Members Present: Amy Holman (NOAA), Dee Williams (USGS), Brad Moran (UAF), Tara Riemer (ASLC), Lynn Palensky (NPRB), Martin Robards (WCS), Steve White (MXAK)

Board Members online: Kenny Down (NPFMC), Phil Thorne (USCG), Katie Howard (ADFG), Ginny Eckert (ASG), Cheryl Rosa (USARC), Mike Miller (IPCoMM), Sharon Randall (BOEM)

Guests Online:Maria Murray (IOOS office), Kristen Yarincik (IOOS Association)

Presenters: Beth Spangler (ANSEP), Aksiin Storer (ANSEP), Chelsea Kovalcsik (UAF/ACSP)

AOOS Staff present:Holly Kent, Darcy Dugan, Alice Bailey, Jill Prewitt, Thomas Farrugia, Sheyna Wisdom

AOOS Staff online**:** Carol Janzen

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

**Adoption of Agenda, Board Meeting Summary, and Executive Committee (ExCom) Summary.**

* ***Action Item:*** *Motion to approve draft meeting agenda, Board summary from April 2023, and ExCom summaries from July 2023 by Lynn Palensky, second by Amy Holman.*

**IOOS Association Update, Kristen Yarincik**

Kristen Yarincik, the IOOS Association Executive Director, gave an update on IOOS Association activities. She reviewed the vision and the strategic initiatives of the IOOS association and highlighted topics requiring advanced observing in support of policy priorities are offshore wind and mCDR (marine carbon dioxide removal). She also discussed the following topics:

* **National HAB Observing Network (NHABON) Program** - grew from $1M in FY20 to $3M in FY2023 and involves projects in all 11 regions.
* **Inflation Reduction Act** - NOAA has dedicated $100M to IOOS; $55M of it will be split and go directly to regions and the rest will be for projects across regions. There will likely be two broad areas: waves and water levels, and ecosystem change monitoring.
* **Diversity, equity, inclusion, and access -** IOOS fellow Ashley Peiffer spent 1.5 years setting groundwork on this topic; IOOS is now compiling resources to share with RAs for developing regional strategic goals.
* **IOOS budget:** the President's budget line and the Senate budget line both have flat funding for IOOS ($42.5M). The House has $41M (the FY22 level).
* **IOOS FY25 appropriations strategy:** There is an effort to shift away from the “Repair and Prepare” strategy and focus on recent lessons learned: account for inflation and asset depreciation in annual requests, and shape requests around topics that previously gained traction. FY25 request: $61M. ($50M core funding; $6M projects and capacity; $5M OTT/COMT).

**IOOS Program Office Update, Maria Murray**

Maria started with the IOOS program in January and covers 6 of the 11 IOOS regions. In her role as regional coordinator, she liaises and advocates between regional associations and the IOOS office, promoting awareness of priorities, operations, and opportunities. She and Sheyna meet regularly to review progress and successes and look for opportunities to address areas of need for AOOS and IOOS. Maria touched on the following topics:

* **NOAA FY22-26 strategic goals:** Be an authoritative source on climate products on services, ensure equity is central to NOAA’s mission, and accelerate growth in an information-based blue economy. IOOS has been a part of NOAA’s strategic goals.
* **Three recent open competition funding**: Climate resilience regional challenge ($575M), ocean-based climate resilience accelerators ($100M), and climate ready workforce ($60M). These have generated a flurry of activity. All funding must be obligated by the end of FY26.

***Board discussion:*** Is someone looking across all the funding opportunities to make sure the money is going out strategically? Maria: The funding opportunity discussion hasn’t had a lot of coordination. The approval process for when the funding opportunities are drafted to when they’re finally approved is up to the White House and the content changes but there are groups meeting. Board members noted it would be good to have more Alaska reviewers that can understand proposals coming out of Alaska. The Climate Resilience Challenge received over 900 applications!

**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).

***Discussion:*** There was a question about the various funding opportunities (IRA, BIL, next CA) and how they work with the funding ceiling. Sheyna said the IRA and BIL are not part of the cooperative agreement ceiling because they are separate/distinct awards. We need to make sure we are looking at projects and longevity of funding, making sure we are thinking about long-term project funding and not committing to long term projects with short term funding. The Board encouraged AOOS participation in the National Ocean Science Bowl.

**AOOS Proposal Update**

Since April 2023, AOOS has partnered on 2 proposals and submitted 2 letters of intent. AOOS has also accepted three new awards. (Spreadsheet included in Board packet)

* ***Action item:*** *Motion to accept new awards by Steve White, second by Dee Williams.*

**FY16-25 Agreement Update**

Sheyna provided an update on the AOOS FY16-20 Cooperative Agreement. The No Cost Extension (NCE) for the three subawards is through May 31, 2024. Fieldwork for all three subawards is complete and data are being analyzed. All the remaining subawards are on track for closeout and AOOS is working on the final report. Once the final report and final invoices are complete, this agreement will be closed out.

**FY21-25 Agreement Update**

Sheyna provided an update on the AOOS FY21-25 Cooperative Agreement and walked through the budget for the core and non-core portions (included in Board packet). NOAA separates core and non-core, and disbursement happens separately. These may merge again next year.

* ***Action item:*** *Motion to approve non-core budget of $1,427,966 by Dee Williams, second by Steve White.*

**2022-2023 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) Update**

Sheyna provided an update on the AOOS Years 1 & 2 of the BIL Cooperative Agreement.

**Other External Awards**

Sheyna provided and update on awards to AOOS, including updates for the 1) the NSF Convergence Accelerator Phase II; 2) the WWF/NPS Bering Sea Transboundary Incident Response Tool; and 3) the new award EVOSTC (Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council) Data Management Program. (Information is provided in the Board packet.)

**Acceptance of New Board Officers**

Right now AOOS doesn’t have a representative from BOEM as Cathy Coon has moved on. Cheryl Rosa (USARC) is also leaving her position and USARC has not yet determined who will replace Cheryl. These two seats are TBD. The nominating committee recommended Dee Williams as Treasurer and Steve White as Secretary.

* ***Action item:*** *Motion to accept Nominating Committee recommendation for appointment of Dee Williams as Treasurer and Steve White as Secretary; moved by Tara Riemer, second by Lynn Palensky.*

**Governance Committee**

A Governance Committee was established last fall to discuss issues for AOOS moving forward including 501(c)(3), Alaska Native Board seats, and overall Board membership. The committee met in May but summer was busy. Sheyna met with an attorney and other RAs to learn more about options for a 501(c)(3) but does not feel like it’s the right time to make a change as relations with the ASLC are good and AOOS is running smoothly. Sheyna would like to take this item off the table for now.

***Discussion:*** In a 501(c)(3), Board members would be participating as individuals instead of Board members representing entities in their day jobs. AOOS Board chair Katrina Hoffman agreed that making a shift to the Board structure would not be welcome at this time. The Board briefly revisited the benefits of a 501(c)(3) that had been discussed in April. AOOS would have a legal status and a more conventional structure. AOOS would also be responsible for the 990 form as well as additional work and expenses. There was consensus that the topic of AOOS becoming it’s own 501(c)(3) should be tabled.

Sheyna provided an update on adding Alaska Native seats to the Board. Mike Miller and Martin Robards joined the Governance Committee which will present recommendations at the next board meeting.

**IRA Funding Discussion**

Sheyna described non-competitive funds coming directly to AOOS: a regional and pan-regional portion. As explained by Kristen Yarincik, $55M will be distributed equally to all the RAs. AOOS is thinking about using part of it for a part time position for administering the IRA funds AOOS receives. While waiting for more details from NOAA, AOOS circulated a request in September for project ideas due October 30. The second non-competitive request is pan-regional with $45M distributed among IOOS regions.

***Discussion:*** The way AOOS will evaluate these project ideas is still under discussion, but will involve a combination of AOOS staff, a subset of the Board, and some subject area experts outside the Board. The Board will have final approval. Regarding timeline, the IOOS office will ideally provide RAs with 6 months to develop proposals (more info forthcoming). Coastal resilience can mean a lot of things and the interpretation will be broad. Food security will be an important topic for Alaska to cover. AOOS should remember this is a 5-year cycle and IOOS will not be supplementing our core budget to keep these projects going. There was a question about the AOOS call for ideas and how to interpret the funding ceiling per project. AOOS will put out a revised version indicating projects should be a minimum of $50K and could be up to $100K per year.

## **Competitive Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) – Arctic Water Levels**

Sheyna described this NOFO, noting it was written to indicate AOOS involvement but we will still need to compete for it.

**PI Update (10 min each)**

**Russ Hopcroft - UAF**

Russ Hopcroft gave an update on the NGA-LTER cruise. Despite issues with the winch, they were able to complete most of the sampling for the long-term projects.

**Steve White, Marine Exchange of Alaska**

Steve White gave the AOOS Board an update on activities and projects at the Marine Exchange of Alaska. The Board expressed support for the Arctic Watch project, and AOOS’ involvement, and discussed the need for additional funding.

**Beth Spangler, Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP)**

Dr. Spangler gave an overview of the many ANSEP activities ranging from Kindergarten through University. There was a discussion about the possibility of setting up a direct-hire agreement between ANSEP and NOAA, similar to the agreements that ANSEP has with the Department of the Interior.

**Askiin Storer, ANSEP Intern**

Aksiin Storer gave a presentation of internship this summer working with NOAA, ADFG, and UAF at Little Port Walter and the Ted Stevens Marine Research Institute (Juneau). AOOS sponsored his internship and plans to continue to offer internship opportunities with AOOS Principle Investigators in 2024.

**Chelsea Kovalcsik, UAF ECO-HAB student**

Chelsea Kovalcsik gave a presentation of her MS. project researching HABs in northern fur seal tissues on St. Paul Island. Chelsea is working on the ECO-HAB project with Drs. Kathy Lefebvre (NOAA) and Lara Horstman (UAF).

**AOOS Staff Updates (10 min each)**

**Ocean Acidification Network (Darcy Dugan)**

Darcy gave an update on the work of the Ocean Acidification Network, including new members to the network’s executive committee, new outreach projects, recent science and upcoming engagement.

**Regional Ocean Partnership (Jill Prewitt)**

Jill gave an update on the Regional Ocean Partnerships program, highlighting two newer projects that AOOS has been engaged with: Arctic Watch and Nalaquq.

**Outreach Update (Alice Bailey)**

Alice gave an update on outreach activities at AOOS, including new outreach publications and meeting materials, event planning, and website updates. Alice also highlighted her recent engagement experience with contacts in Quinhagak, which has led to a new partnership with their science organization, Nalaquq.

**Upcoming Events & Board Expectations**

* 20th Anniversary – 2025
* Fall IOOS Meeting – 2025
* 2026-2031 Cooperative Agreement

Sheyna highlighted the upcoming AOOS 20th Anniversary. AOOS staff has begun planning for this event, including hosting the fall IOOS meeting in Alaska in 2025.

Sheyna also noted that the AOOS staff has begun planning for the 2026-2031 NOAA Cooperative Agreement. We are looking at the process that was followed during the development of the previous cooperative agreements and looking at where we can improve the process, especially with community input.

**Ocean Observing Roundtable (sharing by Board members)**

**Kenny Down (NPFMC):** Kenny highlighted the extent of how AOOS’ work is related to NPFMC. It would be great to find more ways to get AOOS’ information in front of the council, especially with the struggles related to climate resilience/ready fisheries. He highlighted that the October NPFMC meeting focuses on the Ecosystem Status Reports, and the December meeting will include the work of the Climate Change Task Force and the Bering Sea report card. He also expressed interest in the freezing spray project. He has previous experience with this topic and can help with engaging skippers if needed.

**Phil Thorne (USCG):** Phil commended AOOS for supporting Arctic Watch, and the potential for strong partnerships on this work.

**Sharon Randall (BOEM):** Sharon shared that the new BOEM regional director announcement is coming soon!

**Mike Miller (IPCoMM):** Mike expressed support for AOOS’ work overall, and especially the work towards having adequate Indigenous representation on the Board.

**Amy Holman (NOAA):** Amy highlighted the administration leadership support at upper levels of NOAA, including $16M in IRA funding coming out, and other NOFOs coming soon. Dr. Spinrad is interested in following climate equity projects. She highlighted the partnership with ANTHC, including reaching out to regions to ask what we should be doing for on the ground climate services.

**Dee Williams (USGS):** Dee highlighted the work of USGS on flood hazards and erosion, and noted the one year anniversary of Merbok. Merbok spurred additional funding to expand hazard forecasting, and the disaster supplemental gave an additional $8M to expand the project. This will provide a more direct path to climate services.

**Brad Moran (UAF):** Brad noted the record high enrollment this year. Additionally, UAF is hiring multiple tenure faculty in marine policy (1-2 positions), fisheries (2), and 1 oceanography. The next Cooperative Agreement for Sikuliaq operations is coming soon, in place in January. UAF was invited to submit a proposal for a dock in Seward.

**Lynn Palensky (NPRB):** Lynn highlighted the more formal partnership between AOOS and NPRB via MOU. The NPRB Board met just before the AOOS Board and decided on funding for a new suite of marine research projects and approved a pre-proposal RFP for the northern Bering Sea IERP to be released in November. AMSS abstracts due October 6th!

**Martin Robards (WCS):** Martin noted that Arctic Watch is a big program on their radar, and he hopes to bring the experience of the previous waterways safety committee.

**Steve White (MXAK):** Steve expressed support for AOOS’ work, especially our work towards developing partnerships, getting people together, and working towards practical solutions.

**Katrina Hoffman (PWSSC):** Katrina highlighted their kelp hatchery operations, which is the first one in Prince William Sound. She also noted projects including machine learning on salmon scale analysis from ADFG, and many projects on fisheries, oceanography, bird science, education programs. The CoRAL network ran a multi-week long workforce development program including participants from Cordova, Seward, and Kodiak. It will run again next summer in partnership with the ASLC, CRRC, Alutiiq Museum, and Sea Grant.

**Adjournment at 4:30pm.**