



FELLOW NEWS

News for and about the NOAA Fellows

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FOCUS ON FELLOWS: Joel Johnson



Whether picking Michigan blueberries on the Lake Superior shore or surfing reversing tidal falls in Maine, Coastal Fellow Joel Johnson remembers his growing years being filled with fun times on the coast. “I moved from Michigan to Maine at age nine and was lucky to have a mom who took me hiking and a dad who learned how to kayak with me,” says Joel.

After such a childhood, Joel’s undergraduate choice—Grinnell College, a private institution located in the heart of the Iowa farm belt—might seem odd, but Joel is a man of many interests. “Although I picked psychology as a major, I sampled lots of courses, including a biology class on amphibians, religious studies classes, and a drumming class,” says Joel. He also played for the Grinnell basketball team and was a DJ for radio shows highlighting hip-hop and reggae music.

Psychology B.A. in hand, Joel moved back to Maine and put his degree to use as a counselor at a residential treatment center for troubled teens, but he was soon frustrated by the limited career possibilities for people with his degree.

“During that time in my life, sea kayak guiding paid most of my bills,” he says. “As a guide for four years, I spent six or seven days a week on the water and beaches, and I ended up learning about wildlife interpretation, coastal geology, oceanography, and the tides and currents.”

A burgeoning interest in economics led Joel to complete an M.S. in resource economics and policy at the University of Maine. “My thesis focused on nonmarket valuation methods—that is, measuring the value of environmental goods that aren’t traded in a market. Some examples would be clean water, clean air, endangered species, and so on,” he explains.

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Joel (left) and sailing partner Patrick Dilalla aboard the PlumBelly at anchor in Lajes das Flores.

As a graduate student, Joel still found time to enjoy the coast—most notably in 2006 when he and a Grinnell College buddy sailed a 26-foot boat, the *PlumBelly*, across the Atlantic Ocean from the Maine coast to the Azores. “Catching dorado [mahi-mahi] was exciting, but there were some scary moments, too, like the time I was nearly swept off the boat in a gale,” he says.

Joel found out about the fellowship at a graduate career seminar, where former fellow and University of Maine alum Ed Cervone told students that the fellowship was the best job he’d ever had. Joel applied and was accepted to work with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection’s Office of Long Island Sound Programs.

Joel is working on a project called the Coastal Hazards Analysis and Management Program (CHAMP). He researches Connecticut’s erosion and flooding studies, storm history, population growth and development, topography and bathymetry, and other coastal hazards-related


information, assembling it all into an ongoing “state of knowledge” report. That report will be parsed into content for a coastal hazards Web portal that will also showcase interactive coastal inundation maps.

“Eventually, website users will be able to select an area in Connecticut, view inundation scenarios, and start planning for them. Hopefully this tool will help municipal officials visualize, and plan for, accelerated sea level rise,” he adds.

In transitioning from a degree in economics to his coast-oriented fellowship, Joel has undergone a steep learning curve.

“In the first few months, I spent a lot of time just getting conversant in the field and learning about politics and government in Connecticut,” he notes. “It’s exciting to realize that our project is at the forefront of crafting a response to sea level rise and potential changes in storm activity. I feel like I have a role in tackling one of the scarier aspects of global warming, which is the defining environmental issue of our time.

“I am lucky because my fellowship mentor, Kevin O’Brien, is as good as gold,” says Joel. Kevin O’Brien is a geographic information system (GIS) specialist for the agency. “I can stop by Kevin’s cube with any question at any time, and he never gets frustrated or turns me away.”

Has Joel thought about what he wants to do once the fellowship ends? “I’d like to stay in the coastal management realm, but it would be great to find a position that also incorporates economics and fieldwork,” he says. “Having said that, I’m really open to possibilities—as long as I can live near the ocean!” 

FOCUS ON THE COASTAL FELLOWSHIP:

Call for State Proposals

All U.S. states and territories with federally approved coastal zone management programs, as well as states developing such programs for approval, are eligible to submit one project proposal to compete for selection as a 2009–2010 fellowship host state. States that currently host a first-year fellow are not eligible to apply for a second fellow. This year, five project proposals will be selected. Proposals are due to the NOAA Coastal Services Center by close of business on Wednesday, October 22, 2008.

Please visit the website at www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/fellows/projectselection.html for guidance.

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

FOCUS ON THE CENTER

Communicating and collaborating effectively with coastal stakeholders is critically important. Without their input and support, vital advances in the resource management arena would be impossible to achieve.

The NOAA Coastal Services Center has developed products and services that can help coastal professionals assess the needs and characteristics of coastal stakeholders, improve outreach efforts, and forge effective channels of communication and collaboration.

PUBLICATIONS

Introduction to Stakeholder Participation

While there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach to stakeholder participation, this guide presents procedural elements common to many effective stakeholder participation projects and programs. It also provides guidance on identifying stakeholders, learning participation techniques, and evaluating stakeholder participation.

www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/human_dimensions/Stakeholder_Participation_Guidance_Document.pdf

Introduction to Survey Design & Delivery

This publication outlines various methodological components of survey research and provides an overview of survey-related information, techniques, and terminology that can help coastal managers learn more about

stakeholders. www.csc.noaa.gov/cms/human_dimensions/tools_survey.pdf

TRAINING*

Coastal Community Planning and Development

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, and state coastal resource management agencies developed this course to provide a deeper understanding of the principles and strategies, including those regarding stakeholder outreach, that support alternative development efforts in coastal communities.

Conducting Needs Assessments [on-line course]

This course introduces coastal management professionals to needs assessments and what it means to conduct one. By assessing target audience needs, coastal programs can determine a focus and direction and make more informed decisions about program or project objectives.

Managing Visitor Use in Coastal and Marine Protected Areas

This course provides participants with tools to identify and define unacceptable visitor use impacts to natural resources and visitor experiences. The training focuses on a step-by-step process that can help participants determine these impacts and explore a range of strategies and tactics to address them.

Negotiating for Coastal Resources

This course supplies practical skills and information on all facets of negotiation. The curriculum summarizes the roles and applications of advocacy, negotiation, facilitation, education, and outreach. It also outlines negotiating skills and strategies using coastal management and land-use case studies.

Project Design and Evaluation

This course provides the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to design and implement projects that have measurable impacts on a targeted audience. The interactive curriculum is designed to increase project effectiveness.

Public Issues and Conflict Management

This course is designed to increase the ability of coastal managers to design, conduct, and manage meetings in public forums. Course participants will learn how to refine their meeting management skills, deal effectively with the media, and help to resolve coastal and marine-related issues in a public forum.

*Center trainings are generally arranged through local coastal management hosts. For more information on these courses, 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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UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

OCTOBER

11 to 15: **Restore America's Estuaries' 4th National Conference on Coastal and Estuarine Habitat Restoration**
Providence, Rhode Island
www.estuaries.org/?id=138

23 to 24: **7th Marine Law Symposium**
Bristol, Rhode Island
<http://law.rwu.edu/sites/marineaffairs/symposia/seventhMLS.aspx>

26 to 29: **27th International Submerged Lands Management Conference**
Traverse City, Michigan
www.submergedlands2008.com

NOVEMBER

11 to 14: **Gulf Coast Hurricane Preparedness, Response, Recovery, and Rebuilding Conference**
Mobile, Alabama
www.pianc.iwr.usace.army.mil/2008_gulfcoast_conf.htm

13 to 14: **Institute for Business and Home Safety's Annual Conference on Property Loss Reduction**
Tampa, Florida
www.disastersafety.org/conference/

17 to 20: **American Water Resources Association's 2008 Conference**
New Orleans, Louisiana
www.awra.org/meetings/NewOrleans2008/index.html

17 to 20: **Coastal Cities Summit 2008: Values and Vulnerabilities**
St. Petersburg, Florida
www.coastalcities.org

DECEMBER

8 to 10: **9th National Conference on Science, Policy, and the Environment**
Washington, D.C.
<http://hceonline.org/conference/biodiversity/>

5 to 19: **American Geophysical Union's 2008 Fall Meeting**
San Francisco, California
www.agu.org/meetings/

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

NOAA COASTAL SERVICES CENTER TRAINING

Coastal Community Planning and Development

October 1 to 2
Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR)

October 21 to 22
North Carolina NERR

November 5 to 6
Peconic Bay National Estuary Program (NEP) and New York Sea Grant

GIS Tools for Strategic Conservation Planning

November 18 to 21
The Conservation Fund at National Conservation Training Center

Public Issues and Conflict Management

October 27 to 29
North Carolina NERR

December 2 to 4
Hudson River NERR

December 16 to 17
Charlotte Harbor NEP

For more information, please visit www.csc.noaa.gov/training/.

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