

North Pacific Research Board -- Semiannual Progress Report

Project #: 615

Title: Marine Habitat Mapping Technology Workshop for Alaska

Principal Investigators and Recipient Organizations:

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Contract Period and Amount of Funding: September 1, 2006 to August 31, 2008 (\$149,950)

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Project Summary:

In the marine science community, there is now broad recognition that a comprehensive ecosystem approach is necessary for effective management of marine resources. An important step in defining essential fish habitat and potential mitigative measures is to understand the relationship between habitat characteristics, fish distribution, and fishing effort and other human activities. We are conducting a workshop on the topic of marine habitat mapping technologies specifically for marine regions around Alaska, emphasizing (a) available tools and techniques, including potential applications and costs; (b) methodologies for classifying seafloor habitats; (c) a synthesis approach, to aid those who are not experts in the field; (d) a focus on needs specifically in the three large marine ecosystems around Alaska, i.e., Gulf of Alaska, Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands, and Arctic; and (e) a workshop format that includes and educates a wide range of interested groups such as local community leaders, commercial fishing organizations, and NGOs. The workshop format will serve both the wider community and the managers/researchers who need specific technical knowledge about marine habitat mapping.

Progress Summary:

Activity to date has focused on preparation for the workshop, scheduled for April 2-4, 2007 in Anchorage.

Venue: Facilities were originally reserved at the Captain Cook Hotel in June, 2006; however, in mid-January, 2007 the Captain Cook Hotel determined that their meeting space had been double-booked and they declined to honor the reservation. Alaska Sea Grant is in the process of setting up a contract with the Sheraton Anchorage Hotel for use of their facilities instead.

Announcement: A workshop announcement has been distributed electronically to the mailing list of Alaska Sea Grant and to a list compiled specifically for the workshop. Members of the Steering Committee distributed the announcement within their respective organizations. Announcements were also filed in mid-December with the Alaska Chapter of the American Fisheries Society and with

ArcticInfo; however, neither has been posted as of late January. A printed flyer, designed by the staff of Alaska Sea Grant, has been supplied to the Steering Committee, the NPRB office, MAP offices around the state, and attendees at the Alaska Marine Science Symposium. The electronic version of this flyer has also been widely disseminated by email, and appears to be a popular form of advertisement.

Web site: The workshop web site is hosted by Alaska Sea Grant at <http://seagrant.uaf.edu/conferences/2007/benthic/index.html>. The web site currently contains a workshop summary; an electronic version of the flyer; a preliminary agenda; a call for posters and online poster abstract submission form; and an online registration form.

Agenda: The PIs have worked closely with the Steering Committee to design the workshop agenda, select invited speakers, and identify and encourage potential attendees and poster presentations. A preliminary agenda has been posted on the web site.

Concerns: Our primary concern is the ability of federal employees to attend the workshop due to the fact that most federal agencies are still operating under a continuing resolution for FY07. Availability of travel funds is uncertain for many scientists and resource managers from NOAA, the Department of the Interior, and other agencies until the budget situation improves. The steering committee is optimistic that this situation will be resolved by early March, and we are considering options in the event that travel funding remains an obstacle.