

FISCAL YEAR 2020

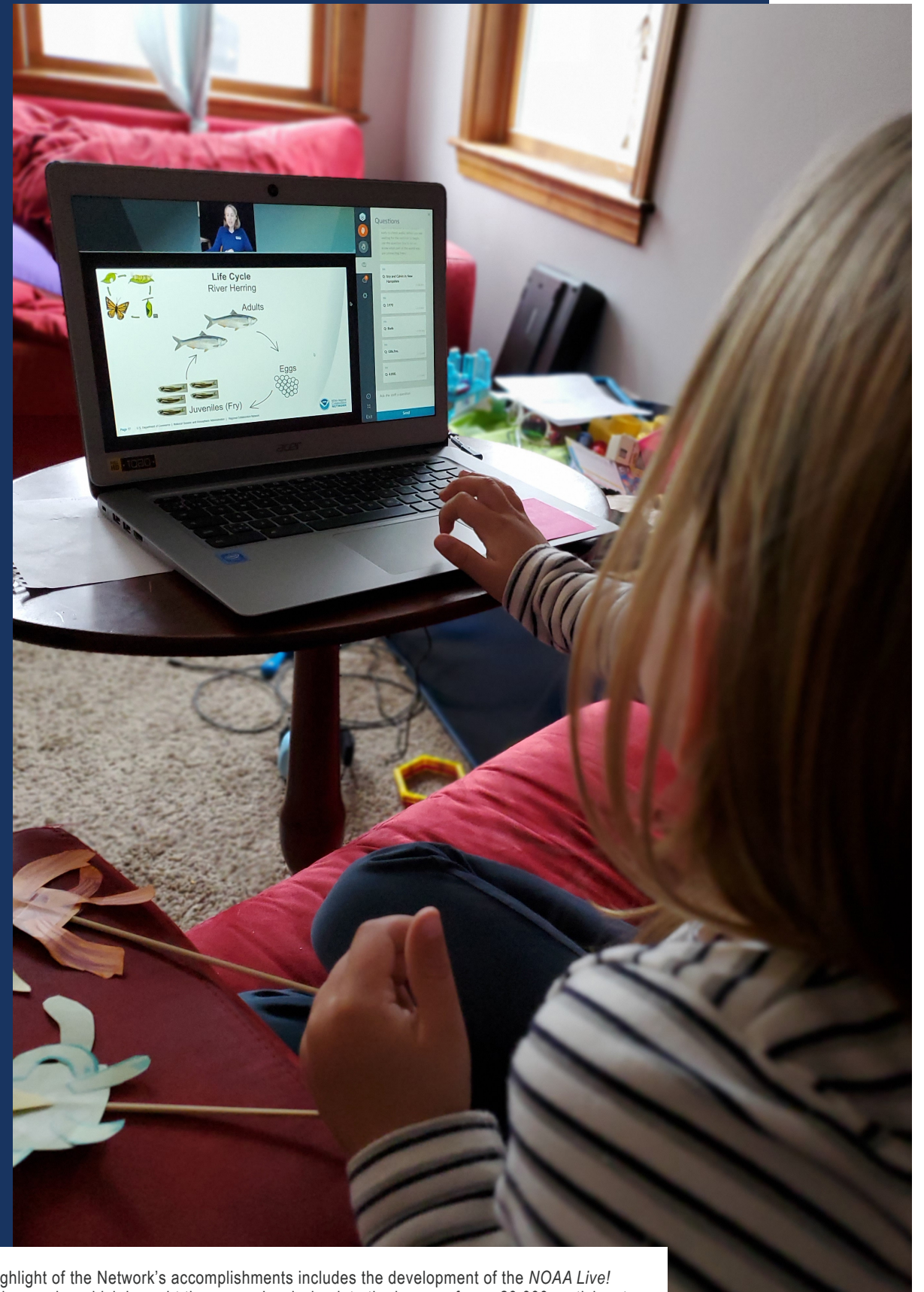
ANNUAL ACCOMPLISHMENTS REPORT



NOAA Regional
Collaboration
NETWORK

Improving NOAA's service to the Nation through collaboration

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A highlight of the Network's accomplishments includes the development of the *NOAA Live!* webinar series which brought the agency's mission into the homes of over 20,000 participants, many who were learning about NOAA for the first time.

DEAR READERS

It is with great pleasure that I introduce some of the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Regional Collaboration Network's most inspiring accomplishments of FY2020.

The Network's 175 employees and partners serve on eight Regional Teams and at Headquarters, where they have championed significant projects and initiatives that would not otherwise have been undertaken. Together, they have catalyzed collaboration across NOAA and with core partners, identified and responded to important regional challenges, and connected people and capabilities to advance NOAA's mission and priorities.

This year, the Network hosted multiple Congressional Roundtables, helping congressional staff understand issues affecting their districts and the capabilities and services NOAA delivers to the public. Multiple Regional Teams helped NOAA meet the needs of the Presidential Memorandum on Ocean Mapping. In the Great Lakes region, the Team continued to support NOAA by securing \$28 million for eleven projects across five Line Offices that support research in the Lakes.

When the COVID-19 global pandemic impacted our work, the teams quickly responded by creating new virtual engagements, like the popular NOAA Live! series, and repurposing existing webinars to fill gaps in critical areas such as hurricane preparedness outreach.



These are just a few of the ways in which the Regional Collaboration Network continues to improve NOAA's service to the Nation. Please join me in thanking these dynamic teams for their outstanding work and celebrating the achievements showcased in this 2020 Annual Accomplishments Report.

Sincerely,

BEN FRIEDMAN

NOAA Deputy Secretary for Operations

Performing the Duties of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator

ABOUT US

Many of the complex challenges that drive NOAA missions are place based, and require interdisciplinary approaches and regionally tailored solutions. The Regional Collaboration Network addresses regional challenges by engaging and connecting people and resources within the regions and with Headquarters, in ways that are rich in regional insight and inform action.

Our Vision

A unified and regionally integrated NOAA

Our Mission

To identify, communicate, and respond to regional needs; catalyze collaboration; and connect people and capabilities to advance NOAA's mission and priorities

ICON KEY

-  National Weather Service (NWS)
-  National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
-  National Ocean Service (NOS)
-  National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS)
-  Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR)
-  Office of Marine and Aircraft Operations (OMAO)
-  Office of Education

Thank you to our Network and partners who work hard to improve NOAA's service to the Nation.

Featured Accomplishments



NOAA teams and staff from every region contributed to content for the *NOAA Live!* Webinar series that reached over 20,000 viewers--sometimes roping their family members in to assist!

Spearheading Educational Content During COVID-19-Related School Closures

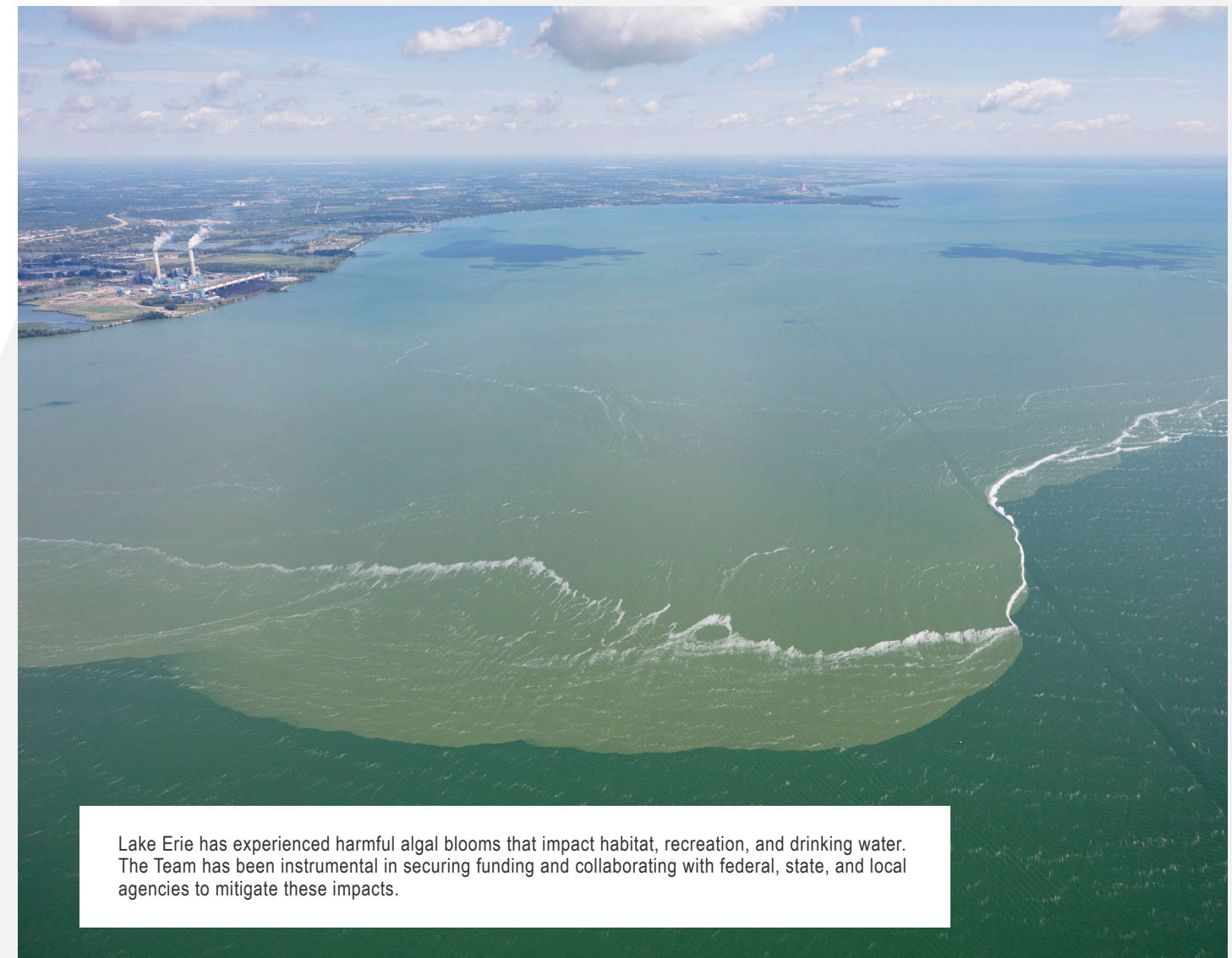


The North Atlantic Regional Collaboration Team partnered with Woods Hole Sea Grant on a 12-week national webinar series geared towards children in grades 2-8. The *NOAA Live!* webinars featured dynamic speakers on a broad range of NOAA topics and a lively question and answer period with kids from across the country and around the world. Over 35 webinars on topics ranging from marine mammals to tornadoes attracted over 20,000 viewers across all 50 states and more than 20 countries. The Team worked with every NOAA region and line office to choose content and identify speakers. This successful model has resulted in spin-offs in the Pacific Islands and Alaska regions and is being used as a model for the first virtual NOAA Science Summer Camp in Seattle, WA.

Great Lakes Team Secures \$28 million for Great Lakes Restoration



The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Team administers the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) on behalf of NOAA. In 2020, the Team secured and distributed more than \$28 million to fund projects across five NOAA Line Offices. As an example, \$866,487 in GLRI funds were used to support 11 projects under the Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training program. The Team also ensured access to funds for critical projects such as providing the Lake Erie Harmful Algal Bloom Forecast for western Lake Erie to stakeholders, including local drinking water managers.

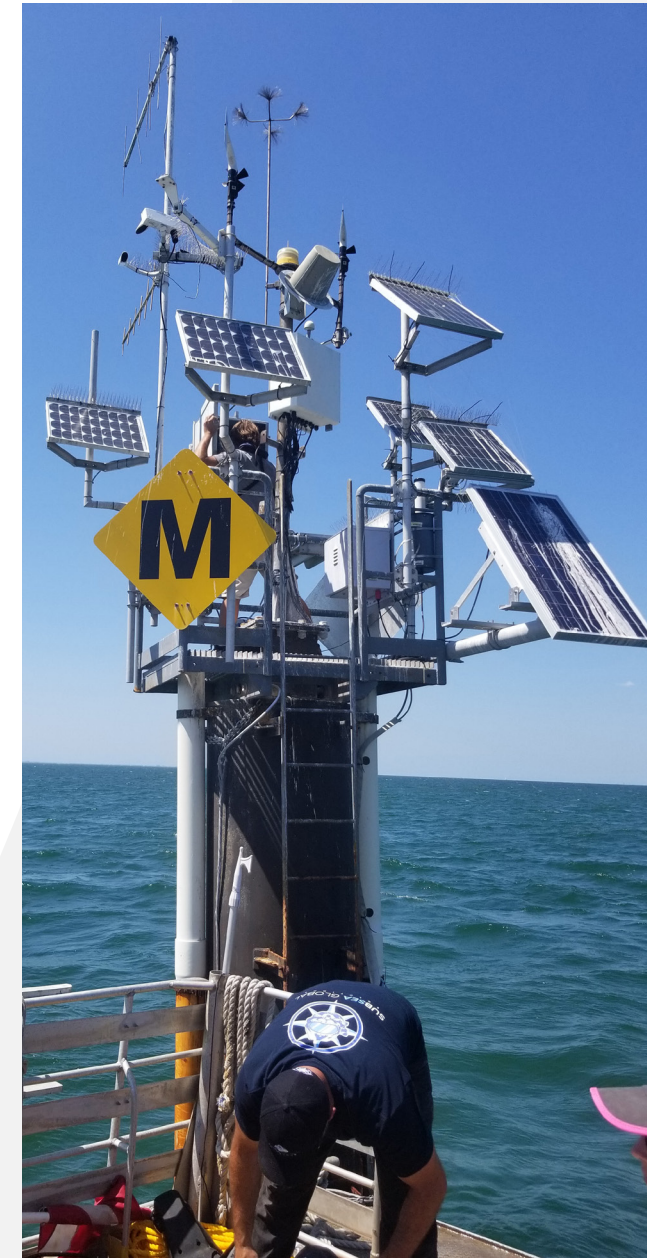
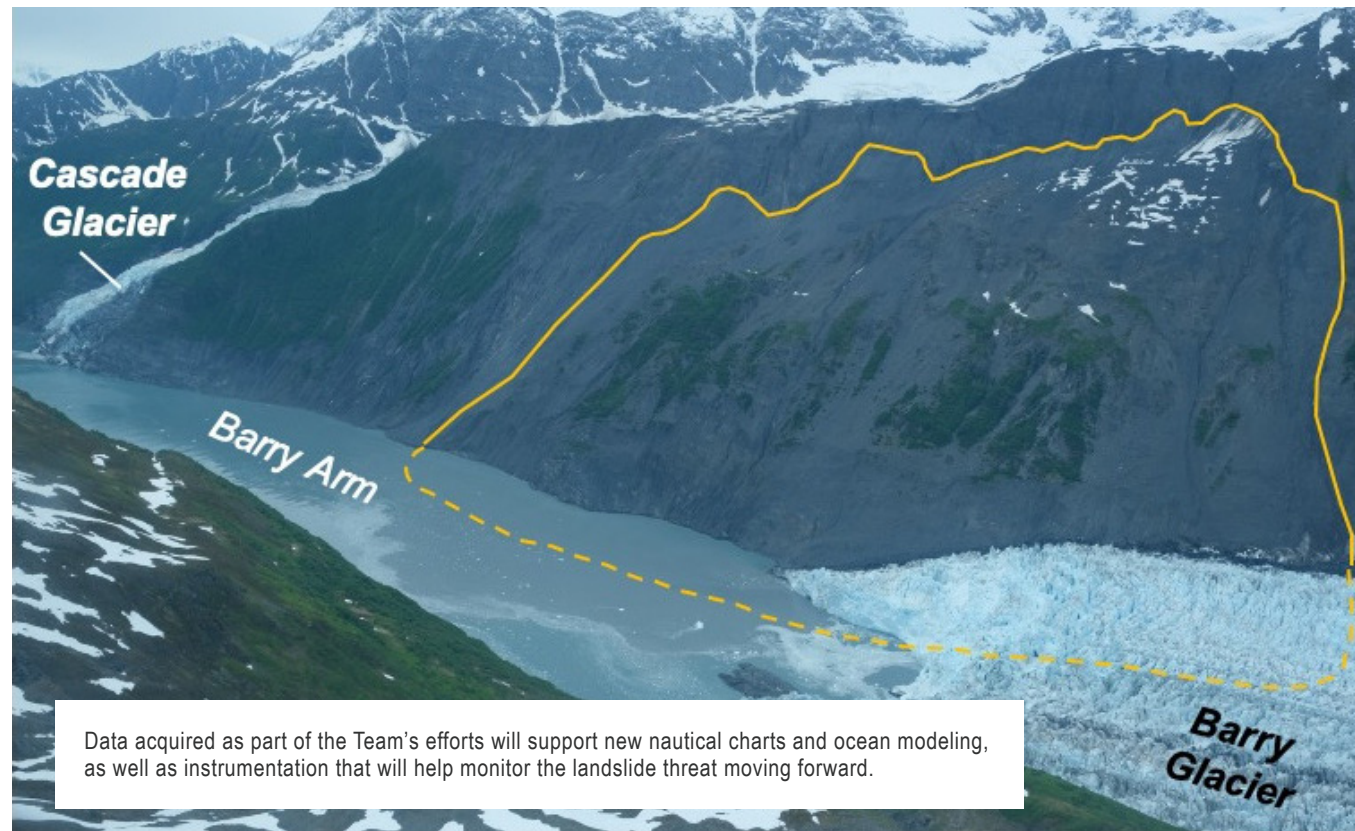


Lake Erie has experienced harmful algal blooms that impact habitat, recreation, and drinking water. The Team has been instrumental in securing funding and collaborating with federal, state, and local agencies to mitigate these impacts.

NOAA Collaborates to Address Alaska Landslide and Tsunami Threat in Barry Arm



In Barry Arm, Alaska, a receding glacier is destabilizing an entire mountainside, creating the threat of a devastating tsunami wave that could swamp vessels, inundate a vital port, and damage nearby communities. The Alaska Regional Collaboration Team emergency response working group members coordinated to provide a unified NOAA response to improve information flow about this possible event. The response included improved NWS tsunami modeling and messaging, a new NOS seafloor mapping contract that allowed for a better understanding of the potential impact, and the development of common talking points for all partners. As part of the effort, NOAA contributed to a [one-stop information hub](#) hosted by the state.



Marine Channels Forecast Makes Navigation Safer for the Gulf of Mexico

The Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Team enabled NWS and NOS collaboration and identification of potential future expansion sites for Marine Channels Forecasts, which are site-specific forecasts for mariners navigating port channels, and include the probability of visibility under a mile.



Additional ports across the country will be able to combine visibility sensor data such as this one in Tampa Bay with NOS data, forecaster added value, and local expertise to produce forecasts vital for marine transportation. *Credit: University of South Florida Center for Maritime and Port Studies.*

Mississippi River Basin Nutrient Runoff Partner Network Enhances Watershed Outreach Tool



The Central and Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Teams are working with a network of partners to reduce nutrient runoff. Together they developed a coastal version of a popular water quality outreach tool that uses a table-top game to teach participants about watershed management. This educational tool is now available to classrooms and local decision-makers across the Gulf states and throughout the Mississippi River Basin via trained facilitators.

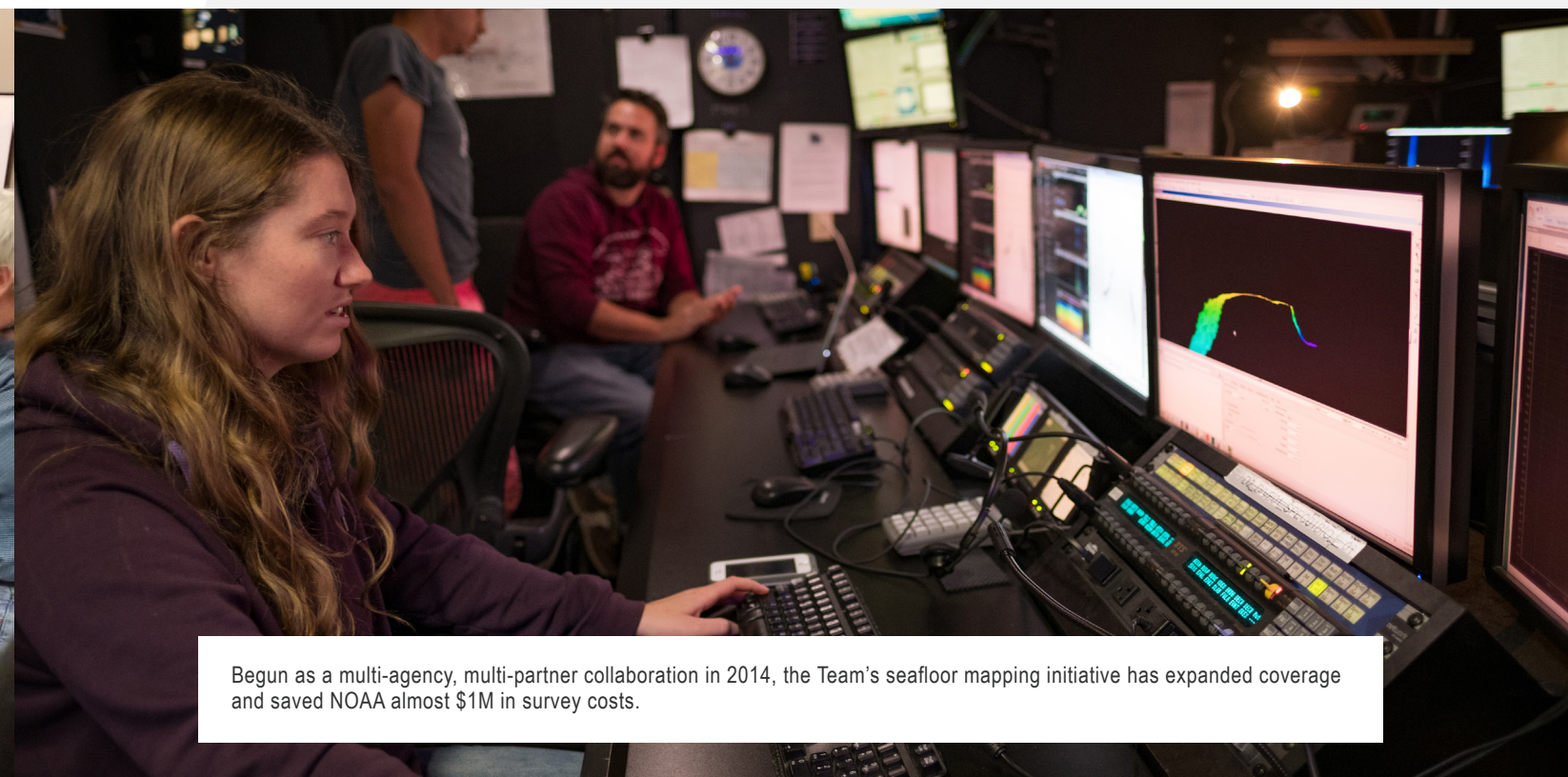
Prioritizing Areas for Future Seafloor Mapping, Research, and Exploration in the Southeast U.S. Atlantic



The Southeast and Caribbean Regional Collaboration Team completed the development of an online mapping prioritization tool for the Southeast. The mapping tool was launched with a webinar with partners to demonstrate how to use the tool and has been used to reveal the mapping priorities for the region. These mapping priorities are already being used by NOAA to allocate ship time and other mapping resources to support the National Ocean Mapping Exploration and Characterization Strategy and SEABED 2030.



The teams provided funds for training of groups that will utilize the new coastal version for engagement with local communities and classrooms like those participating in a pilot workshop in Mobile, Alabama, led by the Minnesota and Mississippi - Alabama Sea Grant Programs.



Begun as a multi-agency, multi-partner collaboration in 2014, the Team's seafloor mapping initiative has expanded coverage and saved NOAA almost \$1M in survey costs.



West Hawai'i Habitat Focus Area Reaches Milestone



The Pacific Islands Team has devoted significant time and effort to support the Habitat Blueprint for the West Hawai'i Habitat Focus Area to improve coral ecosystem health in West Hawai'i. The broad goals of the Habitat Focus Area were met by establishing the Kai Kuleana (community members) and Hui Loko (fishpond practitioners) conservation networks; assessing the resilience of West Hawaiian coral reef systems; restoring estuarine habitat in traditional Hawaiian fishponds; identifying erosion hotspots in partnership with USGS; and investigating coastal nutrient pollution.



Launch of the NOAA West Leadership Program Pilot



The West Regional Collaboration Team conducted focus groups, developed an implementation plan, and contracted with the Office of Personnel Management to develop a curriculum for a 12-month NOAA West Leadership Program Pilot. Launched in September, the pilot offers geographic and cost accessibility to western region NOAA staff, a focus on NOAA culture, regional cross-line networking and learning opportunities, and support for new and emerging NOAA leaders. The pilot will host a minimum of 18 mid-level NOAA staff participants from Line and Staff Offices in the NOAA West geographic area. Once successfully piloted, the program may be expanded in the West and to other regions.

Congressional and International Engagement

Since 2013, the NOAA Regional Collaboration Teams have engaged with Congressional Staff and representatives from state and foreign governments to help them better understand NOAA's capabilities.

These engagements show the power of NOAA's programs and how they work together to address important issues.



Members of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Team visit Congress every year to educate offices on NOAA's programs in and around the Great Lakes.

Ambassador Briefings on NOAA Services in the Pacific

Regional coordinator personnel from the Pacific Region provided four U.S. Ambassadors and the New Zealand Ambassador to the "Freely Associated States" learned with information about the broad swath of NOAA activities in the Pacific including weather and tsunami forecasts, fisheries science and regulatory engagement, coral reef and ocean ecosystems, marine debris, and ocean observations.



Coordinating Great Lakes Work with Canada

The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Team coordinated NOAA's participation under the binational Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement with more than 15 NOAA staff from across four line offices, contributing their expertise to this agreement with Canada. The Regional Coordinator serves as the U.S. co-chair for Annex 9: Climate Change Impacts, and started a popular quarterly webinar series to provide information about climate services in the Great Lakes. This information sharing is credited with increasing participation in the working subcommittee from 5 to more than 50 from both Canada and the U.S.



Great Lakes Team Hits the Hill

The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Team participated in the annual Great Lakes Day on the Hill, bringing staff from OAR, NMFS and NOS to meet with Great Lakes congressional representation. NOAA staff used this opportunity to discuss high water levels and other coastal concerns with the states and to educate new offices on all that NOAA does in the region. The Team also led a briefing for a new Wisconsin House member who sits on the House Science Committee.



North Atlantic and Great Lakes Highlight NOAA's Work in Western New York

The North Atlantic and Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Teams co-hosted a Congressional Roundtable in Buffalo, NY, covering important coastal and inland issues in both the Great Lakes and Atlantic watersheds. Presentations focused on a proposed National Marine Sanctuary, Harmful Algal Blooms, climate and severe weather.



Local Experts Connected with Congressional Staff to Communicate the Importance of NOAA's Work

After completing two New York and one West Virginia in-person congressional roundtables, the North Atlantic Regional Collaboration Team adapted its winning congressional engagement formula to the virtual world. The Team hosted virtual roundtables with congressional and gubernatorial staff from Rhode Island and Connecticut focused on local issues, including aquaculture, climate resilience, and restoration and monitoring.



Getting the Word Out About NOAA Science, Service and Stewardship

NOAA Regional Collaboration Teams use their extensive network to educate employees and partners on NOAA's mission and capabilities.

Showcasing NOAA's Mission a Few Minutes at a Time

NOAA staff and partners increased their understanding of NOAA's diverse mission and successful collaboration with NASA, universities, and industry partners, by tuning in to the Central Team's "Three-Minute-Thesis Webinar" series. Each webinar featured a panel of experts providing a brief presentation and responding to audience questions on topics such as the value of social science in weather forecasting, citizen science efforts, and space weather.



Webinar Series Prepares Southeast and Caribbean for Hurricane Season

To better prepare emergency management personnel and broadcast meteorologists for hurricane season, the Southeast and Caribbean Regional Collaboration Team worked with the National Hurricane Center to host an annual Hurricane Awareness Webinar Series. This year, the series included six webinars (one in Spanish), had 1,647 participants, and covered topics including data collection, forecasts, modeling, and impacts. This series was especially important because in-person preparedness messaging was not possible due to COVID-19.



Sharing Stories Builds an Engaged NOAA's Workforce in the Gulf of Mexico

The Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Team continued its bi-monthly Gulf of Mexico Forum webinar series featuring a variety of topics, including the UN Decade of Ocean Science, hydrology and flood inundation mapping, and research on how the ocean impacts weather. The webinar series helped inform the NOAA workforce in the region and engage partners on important topics within NOAA, and led to further conversations and connections for presenters.

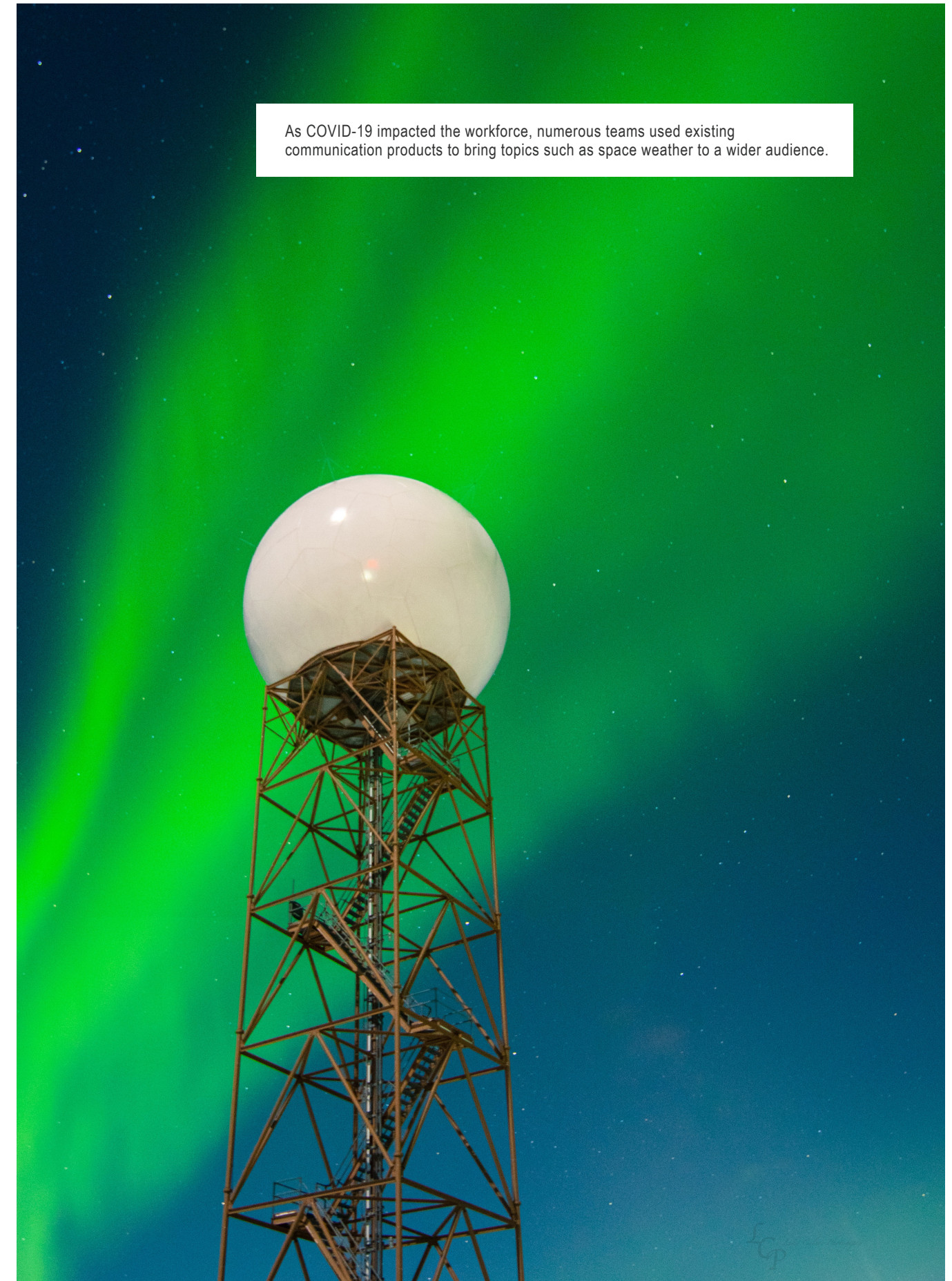


NOAA Addresses Environmental Challenges Across the Pacific Islands

Pacific Risk Management 'Ohana (PRiMO) brought together leaders from some of the low lying Pacific Island nations, businesses, nonprofit organizations, environmental groups, and concerned citizens to discuss ways to address natural and manmade challenges such as water quality, disaster management and economic sustainability.

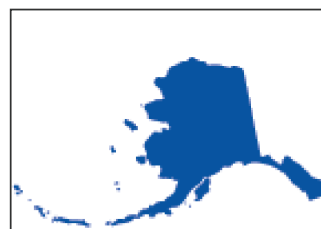


As COVID-19 impacted the workforce, numerous teams used existing communication products to bring topics such as space weather to a wider audience.



Our Network

The boundaries of the West, Central, and Great Lakes Regional Collaborations Teams have shifted to more accurately reflect their area of work.



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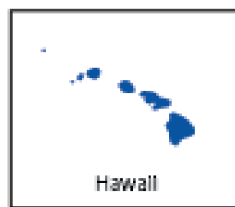
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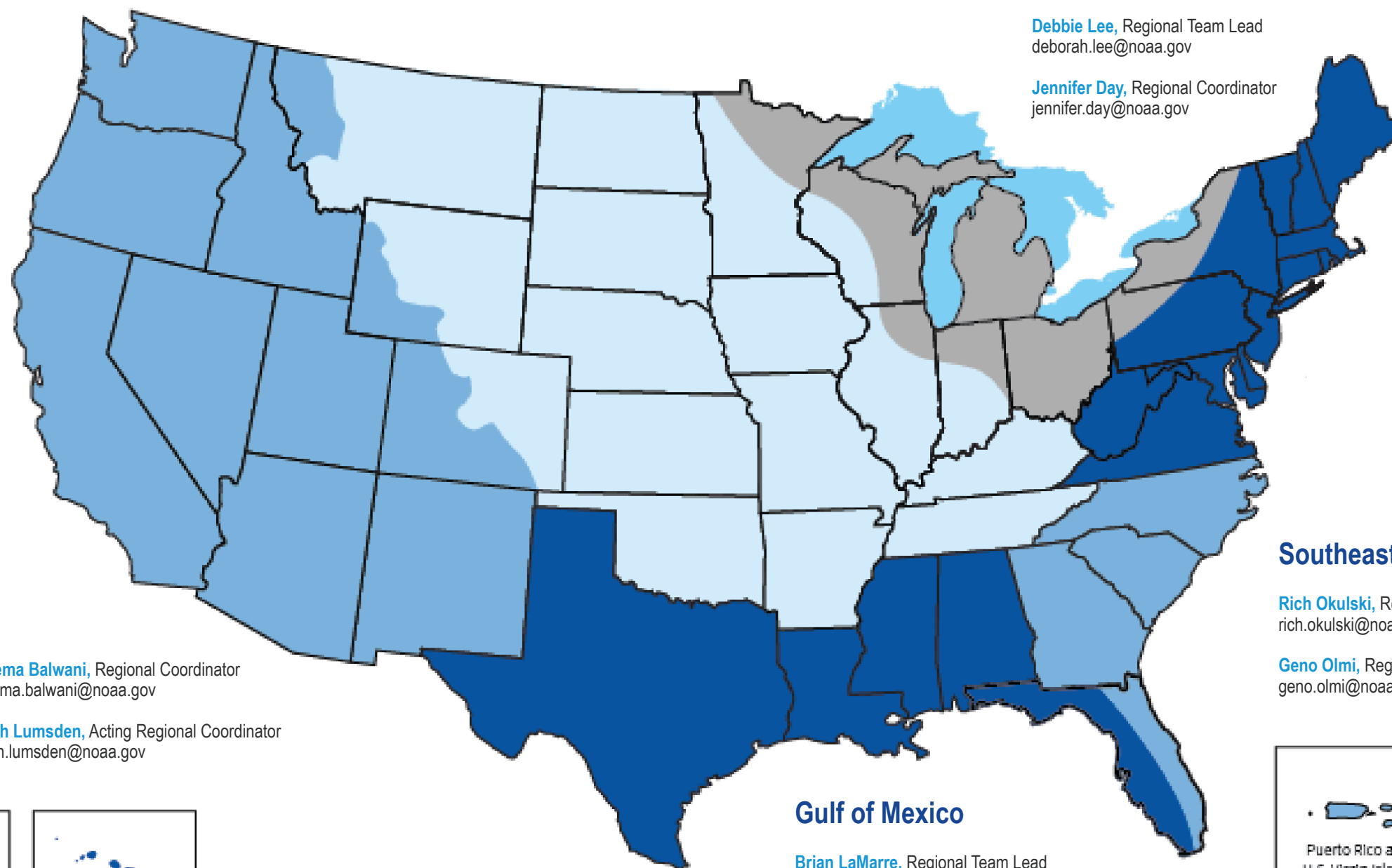
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Around the Regions

ALASKA

New Technologies Advance the Alaska Coastal Mapping Strategy

Team members supported NOAA's response to the 2019 Presidential Memorandum on Ocean and Coastal Mapping by assisting with the deployment of unmanned Sairdrone vessels to survey the North Slope. The Team also piloted the use of a "HydroBall", a simple single beam mapping solution that may be used by partners to map nearshore regions.

Alaska Command Arctic Symposium

The Team represented NOAA at the Alaska Command Arctic Symposium, informing Alaska Command of important environmental issues, NOAA missions relevant to National Security, and areas for future collaboration.

Bering Sea Action Team

The Team led a successful effort with the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) to identify and address immediate research needs for management in the U.S. Arctic.

Expanded Access to the Alaska Marine Science Symposium

The Alaska Regional Collaboration Team worked with the Alaska Teen Media Institute to record keynote sessions and pilot efforts that extended the reach of the Alaska Marine Science Symposium.

Indigenous Engagement

Team members expanded relationships with indigenous communities in Alaska, outlining where and how NOAA should engage and developing a FY21 initiative to increase capacity building and conduct cultural sensitivity training.

State of Alaska COVID-19 Fishing Industry Coordination

NOAA participated in the State of Alaska COVID-19 Fishing Industry coordination planning, thanks to relationships built through the 2019 Alaska Shield emergency response exercise.

CENTRAL

Developing Water Quality Outreach Capacity Building and Tools with Sea Grant

Regional team members worked with multiple Sea Grant College Programs to take a water quality outreach tool designed in Minnesota and develop a tailored coastal version, as well as train a cadre of facilitators to expand the reach of this tool to every Gulf of Mexico state.

Building Connections in the Mississippi River Watershed

The Central and Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Teams grew and strengthened partnerships from the headwaters to the mouth of the Mississippi River through their joint Nutrient Runoff Working Group, sharing information and developing opportunities for best practices.

Regional Climate Services Partnerships

In collaboration with the High Plains Regional Climate Center, the Central Regional Team connected local NWS offices in the region to work with the public to foster engagement, increase awareness, and build skills with a wide range of products, information, and services.

Increasing Knowledge of Space Weather

Through an innovative webinar, the Central Team connected a panel of space weather experts with over 1,500 viewers through both live and recorded webinars, which was featured as part of the *NOAA Live!* Series.



GREAT LAKES

Educating the Public on Record Water Levels

The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Team disseminated NOAA products, information, and services through a series of webinars attracting more than 1,000 registrants as the region faced record high water, extreme coastal flooding and severe erosion impacting lives, property and coastal communities.

NOAA in the Great Lakes Goes Cruising

The Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Team worked to develop a strong partnership with Viking Cruises Expedition Great Lakes and hosted a three-day meeting to showcase information from across NOAA and present ideas for passenger education, engagement and on-board science by NOAA scientists.

High water levels in the Great Lakes is of great concern within the response community. Through the Regional Collaboration Team, I was able to learn a project currently underway to synthesize NOAA's actions to address high water issues for the region. I hope to share the outcome of this project with the Regional Response Team that consists of federal and state agency responders to identify knowledge gaps about the impacts of high water has on current response strategies.

LT Rachel Pryor

NOAA Scientific Support Coordinator

Member, Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Team

Focus on Tribal Engagement in the Great Lakes Region

The Team worked with the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Tribal Forum and Distinct Tribal Program to collaborate on weather forecasting on tribal lands, implementation of the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, and formal consultation on Marine Sanctuary designation.

GULF OF MEXICO

Applying Social Sciences to Coastal Resiliency

Despite a delay and shift to a virtual format due to COVID-19, the Gulf of Mexico Team partnered with the Northern Gulf Institute and the University of Alabama Center for Advanced Public Safety to offer a three-month course on social science and coastal resiliency.

Paddle the Gulf Initiative Connects Communities to Blueways

The Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Team and multiple partner organizations launched an interactive blueways map, outreach events, and a [website](#) for the Paddle the Gulf Initiative, which connects people in the Gulf to coastal streams and rivers, or blueways, that flow into the Gulf of Mexico.

Continued Advances for Interagency High Water Mark Coordination

Building on partnership initiated through Team efforts, representatives from NOAA, USGS, and USACE developed a shared interactive map of where each agency surveyed high water marks after Hurricane Laura and later tropical systems and used it to promote efficient, effective work between the agencies.

Supporting Experiential Learning through Ocean and Watershed Conservation Activities

The Gulf of Mexico Team partnered with the National Marine Sanctuaries Program and the National Marine Sanctuaries Foundation to support a new Ocean Guardian School.

Building Connections in the Mississippi River Watershed

The Gulf of Mexico and Central Regional Collaboration Teams grew and strengthened partnerships from the headwaters to the mouth of the Mississippi River through their joint Nutrient Runoff Working Group, sharing information and developing opportunities for best practices.



Recognizing that most of the problems that challenge Louisiana's riverine and coastal waters are sourced elsewhere, NOAA Regional Collaboration has enabled Louisiana Sea Grant to collaborate across the Mississippi River watershed region to address water quality issues and impacts in the Gulf of Mexico that are caused upstream.

Matt Bethel, Ph.D.

*Associate Executive Director of Research, Louisiana Sea Grant
Member, Gulf of Mexico Regional Collaboration Team*

NORTH ATLANTIC

Environmental Monitors on Lobster Traps and Large Trawlers: Netting Offshore Weather

The regional team leveraged an Integrated Ocean Observing System grant to purchase cost-effective weather stations for the fisheries cooperative research fleet to be deployed on vessels in FY21.

Rapid Response to COVID-19-Related Aquaculture Collapse

Regional team members sponsored a Knauss fellow at Connecticut Sea Grant to conduct an initial aquaculture industry assessment (from Maine to Virginia) on cash flow/alternative markets/revenue streams, access to federal funds, and access to seed.

Regional Water Utilities Meeting Engagement

The North Atlantic Team supported NOAA travel to a regional water utilities meeting in the Mid-Atlantic that provided technical assistance and obtained user feedback on a selection of NOAA climate and water-related tools.

Partnerships in Education Program Support

The North Atlantic Team supported the first virtual cohort of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center's Partnerships in Education Program, a social intervention program designed to address the underrepresentation of Blacks, Hispanics, Native (Indigenous) American and Asian Americans in the marine and ocean sciences.

PACIFIC ISLANDS

NOAA Continues Support of Hawaii State Science & Engineering Fair (HSSEF)

The Pacific Islands Region provided financial and human capital to the HSSEF, including awarding \$8,000 in prize money to projects using NOAA data.

Educating Communities on Marine Mammal and Sea Turtles Regulations

NOAA staff worked together to host popular community workshops that increased awareness and understanding of federal and state rules that protect marine mammals and sea turtles that people come in contact with on beaches and in waters surrounding the Hawaiian Islands.

World Ocean Day Celebration

For the fourth year in a row, the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument and other parts of NOAA worked in partnership with the Ko Olina Resort and other community partners to host a [virtual World Oceans Day Celebration](#) featuring storytelling, musical performances, and education and sustainability activities with a strong career focus.

Creation of a Pilot Hawaii Ocean Guardian Program Pilot in the Pacific

The Pacific Islands region awarded mini-grants to Kapaa High School and Volcano School of Arts & Sciences to support their ocean education efforts through the Ocean Guardian program.

NOAA Summer Intern Symposium

2020 NOAA Summer Intern Symposium participants concluded their programs by presenting their projects virtually to an enthusiastic NOAA audience, including their work on policy, machine learning, biology, oceanography, weather, and social sciences.

Pacific Hosts 3rd Annual Collaborative Climate Science Workshop

NOAA's Inouye Regional Center hosted the 3rd Annual Collaborative Climate Science Workshop that brought people together from across the Region interested in climate science, understanding climate gaps, and improving the use of climate science in environmental management. [Summary report.](#)

SOUTHEAST & CARIBBEAN

Precipitation Estimates to Improve Shellfish Management in Southeast

In a workshop hosted by the Southeast and Caribbean Team, NOAA hydrologists, ecologists, and state shellfish managers collaborated to expand the application of quantitative precipitation estimates to shellfish sanitation harvest-area closure decision-making and more broadly to water quality applications in the coastal zone.

Aiding the Battle Against Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease (SCTLD)

Regional team members supported the travel of five NOAA partners from Puerto Rico to attend SCTLD training in the U.S. Virgin Islands and also paid for the printing of 65 additional SCTLD field identification cards that went to the United States Virgin Islands.

WEST

Science Communication Portal to the Public Workshop

Twenty-two STEM professionals from across NOAA attended a Pacific Science Center-led workshop on the fundamentals of science communication where participants gained knowledge of best practices in informal science education, practiced simple techniques for talking science with non-scientists, and refined key messages related to their areas of expertise.

Supporting Disaster Preparedness for the Western Regional Center in Seattle

Based on the results of an FY19 Seattle Fault Emergency tabletop planning exercise, the West Team repurposed FY20 travel funds to purchase on-site emergency equipment at the NOAA Western Regional Center, which houses the largest concentration of NOAA employees outside of Silver Spring, MD.

Championing NOAA in the Caribbean

To support NOAA in the Caribbean, regional team members produced a quarterly newsletter in English and Spanish, hosted a community meeting via webinar, and initiated a refresh of the NOAA activities inventory for the U.S. Caribbean.

Supporting the NC Sentinel Site Cooperative

The Southeast and Caribbean Team sponsored the North Carolina Coastal Conference, including a special session featuring the science and management activities of the NC Sentinel Site Cooperative.



Because of being on a Team, I can pick up the phone and talk with someone I normally wouldn't interact with in my NOAA career to explore a germ of an idea, plot a path forward, and get results benefitting trust resources and the public at large.

Ginny Fay

*Assistant Regional Administrator for Habitat Conservation,
NOAA Fisheries Southeast Region
Member, Southeast and Caribbean Regional Collaboration Team*

Spearheaded Cross-NOAA Engagement with Port of Seattle

Regional team members hosted a meeting with cross-line NOAA representatives and the Port of Seattle to foster professional networks, improve understanding of Port and NOAA organizational mission and program priorities, and identify areas of mutual interest and potential collaboration.

From geographic information system training to uncrewed aerial systems workshops, NOAA's Regional Collaboration Teams create opportunities to bring NOAA staff and partners together to explore new technology.



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www.noaa.gov/regional-collaboration