

Framework for 2017 Sea Grant-NOAA Regional Integration Work Plan

Region: NOAA West

Project Title: Evaluating NOAA West Watch as a Two-Way Communication Mechanism Between Communities and NOAA

Personnel:

Sea Grant

Lead Program Director: Shelby Walker, Oregon Sea Grant

Project Lead (if different from Program Director): N/A

Secondary Contact: Flaxen Conway, Oregon Sea Grant/ OSU Marine Resource Management Program

Regional Collaboration Team

Regional Team Lead/Co-lead: Chris Sabine, PMEL; Michelle Stokes, Colorado Basin River Forecast Center

Regional Coordinator: Ruth Howell (until Oct 1), Polly Hicks (after Oct 1)

Secondary Contact: N/A

Project Description:

The NOAA Western Regional Team's NOAA West Watch is a system to share information/data, observations, predictions, and keep a database about what's reported out by the media regarding large-scale weather and climatic anomalies. These are topics of bi-monthly webinars and monthly written summaries. NOAA West Watch was originally developed to provide up-to-date information and synthesis on climate and ocean phenomena (e.g., ENSO, "the Blob") internally to NOAA representatives and key partners. However, there may be broader relevance of this type of regular communication and information synthesis beyond this audience.

Further, community-based observations could provide complementary information on irregular or unusual phenomena, expanding understanding of these phenomena and response to them (see Figure 1 below). Therefore our plan is to design and support a pilot project that takes a case study approach at answering the question: **How can the NOAA West Watch (NWW) system reach beyond its current users (experts and partners) and become more of a two-way communication tool that helps everyone to increase understanding and informed decision making?**

Our concept is that while currently the NWW attracts the attention and participation of agency experts and partners, there are likely "community-based experts" (e.g., state and local resource managers, tribal resource manager, industry leaders, local government planners] that could be solicited to engage in the NWW webinars to learn and provide input on how to improve these or related efforts to connect with a wider audience. These community-based experts (CBE) could then serve as "translators/communicators" to stakeholders within their communities of place and/or interest about these events, AND request that these stakeholders share with them their observations about these events over a prescribed time period. After the stakeholders

share their observations with the CBEs, the CBEs could then communicate these back to the NWW experts via the webinars and discuss whether the two are 'matching' – are what NWW experts saying and what stakeholders and CBEs observe connected? This process is portrayed in Figure 1 below.

The key outcome from this effort will include a series of recommendations (potentially in the form of a short report) for improving NWW and developing processes for improving NWW connection to other audiences, both topically and geographically, and how other NOAA regions could adopt similar efforts to improve communication and support informed communication and decision-making.

Project Rationale:

This project will require direct engagement with the NOAA West Regional Team to understand the current audience for NOAA West Watch, identify current or emerging marine-related issues for which the NOAA West Watch structure would be most useful, and determine current information delivery techniques. Oregon Sea Grant, as a boundary organization, will help facilitate the work of the student conducting the project and support engagement with community-based experts.

By engaging with stakeholders directly (community-based experts) and indirectly (users of information via the community-based experts), the project will help determine optimal delivery of information (types, amount, style) as well as optimal format for receipt of observations or experiential information that could inform NOAA data or predictions. This will yield recommendations for NWW that will improve its structure and effectiveness in transferring information, ultimately providing information to stakeholders outside of NOAA that will be both useful and used.

Project Approach:

This pilot project requires several key tasks to be accomplished by the student and advisors, including but not limited to:

- Identifying current or emerging marine-related issues in Oregon (with possible inclusion of portions of Washington or California, depending on topic) for which the NOAA West Watch structure would be most useful (e.g., irregular or unusual phenomena, such as strong ENSO, HABS, etc.). This will include facilitation with the NWW webinar coordinators.
- Identifying and engaging with key CBEs who would benefit most from information provided in the NOAA West Watch webinars and summaries (anomaly-specific)
- Determining optimal delivery of information (types, amount, style)
- Determining optimal format for receipt of observations or experiential information that could inform NOAA data or predictions
- Developing recommendations for translating pilot information to other topics or regions, including the level or effort/investment needed to make it successful.

From this pilot effort, the student (under the guidance of his/her graduate committee, and with input from Regional Team leadership and 1-2 additional members-see Student Governance, below) will gather data that helps us to evaluate and document what happened, including identifying the factors/approaches others within the region (and nationally) might consider when designing similar efforts. For example:

- Identifying who in the NOAA West region is underserved by NOAA data
- Determining what is the appropriate spatial and temporal scale for these kinds of efforts
- Best practices for identifying and engaging with CBEs for individual environmental events, particularly for events with little lead time and for which NOAA would need to spin up quickly, and recognizing high time demands of CBEs
- Best practices for anticipating/recognizing what are the events/anomalies and kinds of NOAA data / information that CBEs and stakeholders are interested in
- Recognizing what kinds of data/information stakeholders can contribute
- Learning how much particular places/areas are impacted by these events
- Understanding and acknowledging in what ways has this effort improved communication within and between groups
- Agency timeliness and responsiveness relative to CBE and stakeholder feedback

Therefore, specifically, for this pilot effort, we will pick 3 large scale anomalies to focus on for the year. Each topic will likely draw the attention of similar and different participants. For each topic, the NWW Agency Experts (AEs) would offer their standard webinar about that anomaly to the traditional agency and partner audience. However, in this pilot effort, specific CBEs will be invited to attend as well. Afterwards, the CBEs who attended the webinar and have read the summaries will extend this information to stakeholders engaged in this topic in their region. They will request that these stakeholders report back observations regarding this topic to the CBEs within a two-month time period. The CBEs will then report stakeholder observations to the NWW AEs at the next webinar. This will require a brief report back function to be added to the webinar agenda.

This project would form the foundation for a Masters student research study at Oregon State University. The student would be advised by the Director of Oregon Sea Grant, with committee members including (anticipated) the Director of Oregon State University's Marine Resource Management Program (a social scientist and community engagement specialist), and a Community-Based Expert representative (state resource manager or similar). The student and major advisor would provide regular (every 2-4 month) updates and opportunities for feedback on the project status to the NOAA West Regional Team leadership and 1-2 additional Regional Team members.

Key Milestones:

- *Summer 2017:* recruit student
- *Fall 2017:* student will become familiar with the NWW; work with advisors to identify CBEs and stakeholders in the study area; conduct a relevant literature review; and design data gathering.

- *Winter 2018*: tap into first of three pilot webinars; engage and follow up with connected CBEs; begin data gathering and analysis.
- *Spring 2018*: tap into second pilot webinar; engage and follow up with connected CBEs; continue data gathering and analysis.
- *Summer 2018*; tap into third pilot webinar; engage and follow up with connected CBEs; continue data gathering and analysis.

Required Forms:

- [90-2 spreadsheet and 90-4 forms](#)
- Budget justification for the planned project
- Signed letter of endorsement from the Regional Team Lead and Regional Coordinator (see template)

Figure 1. Proposed Model

