



FELLOW NEWS

News for and about the NOAA Fellows

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MEG GARDNER



CLASS OF
2013-2015

Fellow Meg Gardner has wanted to work in the environmental field ever since she was very young, and she feels fortunate to have been given the opportunity to fulfill that dream. Who instilled in Meg a love for the natural world and an enthusiasm to protect it? Her own mom was the biggest influence, says Meg, who has vivid memories of days spent with family exploring the ocean, bays, and rivers in her childhood

home of Point Pleasant Beach, New Jersey.

It was no surprise to friends and family when Meg went on to study marine biology, environmental science, and photography at Roger Williams University in Bristol, Rhode Island.

While pursuing a master's degree at the University of New Hampshire, Meg chose a program in integrated coastal ecosystem science, policy, and management through the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment. Her internship focused on collaborative wetlands carbon research at the Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve.

More than a few mentors had suggested the Coastal Management Fellowship to Meg. Since she had already worked in the nonprofit sector, Meg was looking for coastal management opportunities in the government sector. The fellowship provided just that, and felt like the perfect next step.

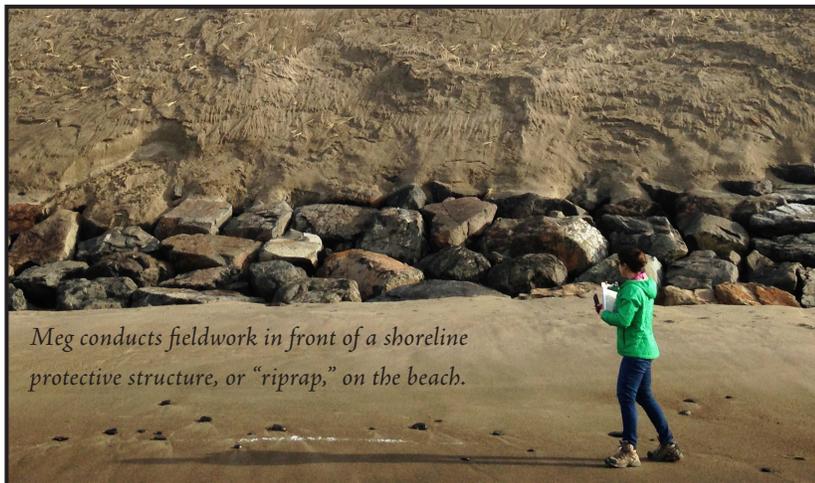
Meg is working with two state agencies in Oregon—the Oregon Coastal Management Program and the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. She is evaluating the impacts of erosion and shoreline armoring on Oregon's beaches through the creation and analysis of shoreline armoring and coastal hazard data sets.

These data sets will be used to identify vulnerable coastal areas, evaluate the effectiveness of current state and local policies, and integrate information about future climate change impacts. Her project aims to address erosion issues more effectively and balance the protection of private property with the public beach.

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Meg conducts fieldwork in front of a shoreline protective structure, or “riprap,” on the beach.

Partners working with her include coastal land use planners, state government agencies, oceanfront homeowners, and nonprofit groups. Together, they leverage local knowledge, consider stakeholder values, and help design potential policy and management changes.

Meg’s final product will be an online tool for coastal hazards information designed for state and local land use planners and coastal management practitioners. The tool will ensure that the data sets she has created will be accessible to and useable by all planners regardless of their in-house technology.

In addition, Meg will complete an analysis and review of Oregon’s coastal armoring and erosion policy to address frequently asked management questions and offer recommendations for future policy and adaptation strategies. She anticipates that this analysis will shed light on the most vulnerable coastal areas, review armoring options, and outline

policy recommendations for new and existing coastal development.

When not working on coastal issues, Meg enjoys being active outdoors. “For an outdoor enthusiast, Oregon provides many adventure opportunities that I have been taking advantage of since moving here!” she says. She competes in triathlons and especially enjoys swimming.

Even though Meg has spent most of her life on the East Coast, she already feels like a true Pacific northwesterner. To her, Oregon is one of the most beautiful and enchanting places in the country, and she would love to call it home for the foreseeable future. She’d also like to continue working in coastal resource management, whether in government, through the private sector, or with a nonprofit organization.

“I am especially interested in climate change resilience and stakeholder-driven processes,” Meg notes, “as well as science communication and outreach for environmental issues.” 



FOCUS ON FELLOWS LIZ PODOWSKI

Between second and seventh grades, Fellow Liz Podowski lived in a different place each year—Tennessee, Illinois, Kansas, and Texas (both Houston and Dallas). While living in Texas, she signed up for an experience that cemented her passion to understand and improve her local environment. This experience was a month-long, immersive field course focused on geology, ecology, and sustainability during a summer in the Arizona desert, courtesy of Columbia University’s Biosphere 2 Center.

From that point on, Liz’s educational and career path took a very science- and water-focused direction. She led her high school’s program in energy and the environment. And later, while earning bachelor’s and master’s degrees in biology at Penn State University, Liz studied deep-sea chemosynthetic ecosystems of the Gulf of Mexico and western Pacific Islands regions.

While earning a second master's degree in landscape architecture at the University of Oregon, Liz evaluated the performance of stormwater wetlands in the Staten Island Bluebelt. She learned about the fellowship during this period and decided to apply.

Liz's fellowship is with the New York State Department of State in the Office of Planning and Development, which is home to the state's coastal management program. Her project supports offshore planning in the Great Lakes, Long Island Sound, and Atlantic Ocean.

In this role, Liz provides scientific, geospatial, and analytical expertise to assist with offshore wind planning efforts, offshore project review, and the development of new data and data standards to support regional ocean planning efforts.

In addition, Liz has created interactive narratives, infographics, and technical guidance to communicate in a clear and concise way with decision makers, the public, and other agencies.

As project manager overseeing the development of the Geographic Information Gateway, Liz ensures that the website makes her office's geographic data publicly available. The gateway will serve as a public communication tool while also supporting the planning activities of internal staff members and local and state governments.

When released, the gateway's user-friendly interface will enable



Liz and Tom at the summit of Camelback Mountain in Arizona.

the public to view and download over 400 data sets related to Atlantic Ocean and community resilience planning activities. Its custom-built, interactive story maps will help visitors explore and understand topics ranging from offshore wind planning activities to the use of living shorelines as a community resilience tool.

Moreover, the gateway will increase transparency and facilitate data sharing among local, state, regional, and federal partners.

When not at work, Liz enjoys hiking and snowshoeing with her fiancé, Tom, and their dog. She has also participated in running and biking events in New York. These events include the Ragnar Relay from Saratoga Springs to Lake Placid—where a team of 12 runs 200 miles in 28 hours—and the “ColumBikesDay” event spent riding the Erie Canalway bike trail from Syracuse to Albany over Columbus Day weekend. Liz also enjoys traveling, especially to Texas and Oklahoma to visit family.

When her fellowship ends, ideally Liz would like to stay right where she is for another couple of years, continuing to work with the Department of State to gain more on-the-ground experience with communities, expanding her project management experience, broadening her understanding of and expertise in coastal management, and pursuing additional opportunities related to coastal resilience.

“Whether I remain with the Department of State or not, I’d like to stay in the Northeast,” she says. “I want to continue working in a field where I can use my scientific training and landscape design and planning experience to creatively address coastal management issues across a wide range of scales, from the ocean environment to coastal communities.”¹²

FOCUS ON THE COASTAL FELLOWSHIP: SEA GRANT ENDORSEMENTS

The NOAA Office for Coastal Management has received the 2015-2017 Coastal Management Fellowship endorsements from Sea Grant. The office received 38 applications from 20 Sea Grant programs across the country. Using four criteria—academic performance and diversity of educational background, endorsement by the applicant’s Sea Grant director, support from two letters of recommendation, and content of the applicant’s goal statement—12 finalists will be selected from among these candidates.

A workshop to match states with fellows will take place in Charleston, South Carolina, from April 27 to May 1, 2015. Of the finalists selected, six will be placed with a host state. Each of the selected host states will send its fellow mentor to the placement workshop, and the finalists will be brought to the workshop at the expense of NOAA.

The workshop consists of an orientation, project proposal presentations, finalist presentations, finalist and host state interviews, and fellow matching. If a state does not find a suitable candidate during the workshop, it will be given the option to defer fellow placement for one year. States will only be allowed one deferment before they have to reapply.

This year, the host states are Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Oregon, and Puerto Rico. For more information on the 2015 state projects, please visit the fellowship website at www.coast.noaa.gov/fellowship/stateprojects.html or contact the fellowship coordinator at ocm.fellowships@noaa.gov. 

WHAT’S NEW ON THE DIGITAL COAST?

Calling All Visual Learners – The Digital Coast Video Gallery has helpful information for you and your staff, and your community. Topics include ocean and coastal economics, explaining storm surge, resilience tools, creating map mashups, and the dimensions of ocean data—why 3-D matters. Visit the video gallery at www.coast.noaa.gov/gallery/videos.

Stories from the Field: Visualizing Local Sea Level Rise Scenarios – As a small, isolated Pacific island, Saipan is susceptible to the impacts of climate change and sea level rise. The island’s coastal resource management division needed inundation maps to expand community mitigation planning and stakeholder education efforts. Working with NOAA’s Office for Coastal Management, the agency added inundation data for Saipan into the Digital Coast’s Sea Level Rise Viewer. The resulting inundation visualizations helped island officials update their planning efforts and integrate sea level rise education into schools. Robbie Greene, 2012-2014 Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands fellow, was key in these efforts. For more information, visit www.coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/stories/CNMI-SLR.

To stay updated on all new additions to Digital Coast, subscribe to the *Digital Coast Connections* e-newsletter at www.coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/publications/subscribe. 

NEWS ABOUT FORMER FELLOWS: WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

We asked 2006-2008 Massachusetts fellow Wes Shaw to tell us about what he's been up to since his fellowship. Here's what he had to say.

Where was your fellowship, and what was your project?

My fellowship was based at the Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management in Boston, where they brought me in to help the state address the ever-growing storm damages in their coastal floodplains. I ended up getting to assemble a program we called StormSmart Coasts, the goal of which was to help people working at the local level address the challenges of storms and floods (and later some climate change issues, too).



What did you do after your fellowship?

After StormSmart Coasts got a great reception in Massachusetts, other states started asking if I could help them do something similar. For various reasons, the best way to do this seemed to be for me to start my own business, so when my fellowship ended, I moved back to the West (home) and filed my papers and formed a company I called "Blue Urchin," a name I picked because I wanted something marine but not cute. Then, with the support of some great groups, agencies, and individuals (NOAA, EPA, Gulf of Mexico Alliance, and Northeast Regional Ocean Council, to name a few), I helped orchestrate the expansion of StormSmart Coasts.

What are some of the accomplishments you are most proud of?

StormSmart, now in 11 states, is still plugging along, but lately I've been working on a bunch of other things. The two that I'm currently most excited about:

- I'm the lead coastal consultant for FEMA's Community Rating System. I get to work with a fantastic team of people and help guide national flood policy. It's a great program and a lot of fun to work on.
- I'm the co-developer of MyCoast.org, a site built to enable the easy collection of data around and after coastal events of various sorts. In its simplest form, MyCoast lets people add a tiny bit of data (often just a photo submitted via our mobile apps or the website), and we leverage that data to paint a much more complete view of that event. MyCoast started with documenting storms and king tides, but people are coming up with all sorts of interesting new ways to use the technology. For example, we're currently wrapping up development on a marine debris documentation tool and working with an expert on capturing oil spill impacts on wildlife. MyCoast is up and running in six states so far, and we hope to keep expanding.

Did the fellowship help lead you to where you are? If so, how?

It's not an exaggeration for me to say that none of this would have happened without the fellowship. The fellowship opened doors that would have remained closed to me for years without it. And the network of, um, fellow fellows is invaluable.

If you are interested in hearing more about what Wes is doing, you may contact him at wes@blueurchin.com. He checks his email more often than he'd like to admit. 📧

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UPCOMING CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

APRIL

18 to 21: American Planning Association's National Planning Conference
Seattle, Washington
www.planning.org/conference

MAY

12 to 14: National Adaptation Forum
St. Louis, Missouri
www.nationaladaptationforum.org

JUNE

9 to 11: Capitol Hill Ocean Week
Washington, DC
<http://nmsfocean.org/CHOW-2015>

NOAA OFFICE FOR COASTAL MANAGEMENT TRAINING

APRIL

On-Site:

14 to 15: Planning and Facilitating Collaborative Meetings
Naples, Florida

21 to 22: Coastal Inundation Mapping
Cambridge, Massachusetts

MAY

Online:

20: OpenNSPECT

JUNE

On-Site:

11 to 12: Project Design and Evaluation
Tiburon, California

22 to 23: Project Design and Evaluation
Everett, Washington

25 to 26: Project Design and Evaluation
Tacoma, Washington

For more information on virtual and site-specific trainings, visit www.coast.noaa.gov/digitalcoast/training/list.

CREDITS AND INFORMATION

Fellow News is published by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office for Coastal Management 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 ocm.fellowships@noaa.gov

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