

# Letter from the Principal Investigator

May 2021

Hello everyone,

It's an honor and a privilege to introduce myself as the new Principal Investigator and Project Director of Alaska NSF EPSCoR Fire & Ice.

Many of you know me already, but for those who don't, here's a little background: I'm currently a Professor of Marine Biology at the UAF College of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences, and just recently stepped down as CFOS' Associate Dean of Research and as Director of the Institute of Marine Science and the Coastal Marine Institute. I have a Ph.D in Biology from the University of California-Santa Cruz, and I've worked at UAF in various faculty capacities since 1999. My research interests include intertidal and nearshore ecology, in particular processes that regulate seaweed and invertebrate communities. I also teach various courses, including scientific diving, which is a personal passion of mine.

I've been involved with the Fire & Ice project since the beginning, as a co-PI and as co-lead of the Coastal Margins component. Within the component, my principal role has been coordinating and leading our intertidal research in Kachemak Bay. On a practical level, that means I'm out in the field (and in quarantine!) a lot during the summer, so I expect the next few months to be very busy ones as I'm settling into the job.

I'm stepping into the position at an important time, right at the midway point of our 5-year project. A lot of the work we've done in the last couple of years is starting to pay off in the form of individual discoveries, datasets, and publications. The challenge now is to expand on our progress to reach larger conclusions about changes to Alaska's boreal fires and coastal margins, ones that utilize and synthesize the many different kinds of data we're generating. I'm also excited to work on our sustainability plan, so the progress we make in Fire & Ice will continue to benefit Alaska into the future.

Fortunately, we're well-suited to accomplish all of our goals. That is in no small part a reflection of Pips Veazey's strong leadership: Pips had a long and successful run at Alaska EPSCoR, and we're all deeply indebted to her for the current solid state of the program. But she didn't do it alone: part of the secret to her success was building talented and capable Management and Leadership teams. With these folks to help shoulder the load, I have no worries about us continuing our success.

As for me, I'm looking forward to the job. While I'm intricately acquainted with the Coastal Margins component, I have lots to learn about the rest of the project. So I'm very excited to find out more about our Boreal Fires research, not to mention the Diversity, Education and Workforce Development component and some of the other important aspects of our operation.

EPSCoR is a big and complicated project, but we've got the experience and skills on board to keep it going strong. I look forward to helping it succeed, and I also look forward to working with all of you along the way.

Sincerely,



Brenda Konar



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