

# State Committee for Research Notes

Friday, November 22, 2024

11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.



[Zoom Recording](#)

## Agenda:

1. Review and approve June 07, 2024 Notes– Paul Layer
2. [Innovators Hall of Fame 2025](#) update– Paul Layer
  - a. Paul provided an update and noted that the Hall of Fame Committee consists of Mead Treadwell, Jon Bittner, Brian Holst and Paul Layer. He asked if there was anyone else interested in serving and to notify him. Currently, there are no nominees and he asked that they encourage others to reach out to organizations and corporations for nominations. Mead talked about nominating cultural inventions and getting the word out in that area. There were suggestions. The committee will meet in early January to review applications. Paul suggested that we have at least 3 nominations.
3. Program Updates
  - a. [NSF EPSCoR](#) - Brenda Konar talked about the Fire and Ice finishing up and they are at the end of their no cost extension which ends in December. They are working on publications and peer reviewed publications. To date, Fire and Ice has 94 publications since inception. They have another 48 in progress. They had a special issue come out in the Journal of Experimental Marine Biology and Ecology and they got their Firewise VR game published online. Tara Borland has been busy with their Science Olympiad. We have noticed that it's attended by urban schools and schools on the road system, but they would like to better connect with some of the rural communities. They started the Mini Science Olympiad to do just that and have been to Seldovia and Klukwan. There are plans to go to Port Graham and Saint Paul Island. The outreach has been successful and now Seldovia and Klukwan are putting together teams to come to the Statewide event in Fairbanks in March 2025. There are plans to seek additional funding for 3 years worth of mini events in different rural areas. There are professional development plans in place as well and 68 travel awards were given out as they sponsor people. The strategic plan is posted on their website and that will be updated soon. They just had a workshop via Zoom this week that was well attended with 168 attendees from around the State. Lastly, they just did their seed 1 award and we won. UAS faculty will be studying and engaging indigenous knowledge in the Gulf of Alaska marine policy decisions. UAF will be looking at escapement quality

among sockeye salmon in the Copper River. UAA faculty will be studying spring phytoplankton blooms using multiple monitoring tools. The cool thing about this award is that we are using 3 communities and working with them and getting their input. One student was awarded from UAF and she will be tracing the organic matter source of continental shelf surface sediments. This will help learn about the link to mariculture. Their next all hands on meeting is Fall of 2025. They now have Edocs for reporting and the group will be included so please respond since you are a part of the EPSCoR team. Paul added that with the changes, there will be more responsibilities for the group under the new structure with NSF and the EPSCoR program.

- b. [INBRE](#) - Brian Barnes updated that he did retire and the University is hiring for his replacement principal investigator for our Statewide INBRE program which is funded by NIH. They started a 6 year award on August 1, 2024 and they will need a new leader. There are pilot grants for developing researchers throughout our network which includes Illisagvik College, the 3 Universities, ANTHC and Southcentral Foundation. An interesting study is Matt Gilbert, a UAF faculty member, who is working on how changing temperatures of streams and oceans are affecting energetics and metabolism of salmon. This is to try and predict what is going to happen to our 5 species of salmon. Their team had to appeal as this project was initially rejected by NIH and they won the appeal. They are also busy with final planning for their Western Regional Idea Conference in Anchorage on February 26, 27, and 28, 2025. They are expecting 3-400 people throughout the Western United States as well as nationally. There will be pre-conference workshops, student professional development and science sessions and panels. The opening reception will be at the Anchorage Museum and the conference will be at the Captain Cook Hotel. There is a new director for the IDA program with NIH, Mercedes Rubio started a few days ago and we will watch for any changes that affect the 23 states plus Puerto Rico in the program.
  - c. [NASA EPSCoR](#) Paul read Denise Thorson's update as she was unable to make it to the meeting. She is the PI for NASA EPSCoR here at UAF. She said things are going well and they are making awards as they are in the middle of their 5 year grant.
  - d. DoE EPSCoR - Paul was unable to contact Mari Shirazi for her update.
4. Changes to the NSF EPSCoR program and the role of SCoR - Paul Layer updated changes to the NSF EPSCoR which is a leftover topic from the June 2024 meeting. The changes include the structure in terms of management to the programs and how those awards are made. Alaska had the option to go with the new model or work with the old one and we decided to go with the old model. We will keep you informed on the changes. Alaska is a part of the coalition of States that lobbies for EPSCoR funding across the different agencies. We have staff in Washington, D.C who work with consultants at Van Scoyoc. Nettie goes down in February and meets with our Alaska delegation to talk about the value of EPSCoR and the IDEA program. They discuss problems as Alaskans and look at

the changing Arctic, food security, energy security and others that are important to us. There is a pool of funding from EPSCoR and INBRE throughout the university funding studies that addresses those issues. Your work as members, advises and guides the State science and technology plan. This needs to be updated next year. This is what guides Brenda Konar and the programs and plans she puts together. It also guides what Brian with INBRE team puts together. Your input is very important and we appreciate you. Paul added that since he is retiring, he is stepping down as co-chair; President Pitney announced that Brian Smentkowski from the University of Idaho will be his replacement.

5. [Science and Technology Plan](#) - Paul said that this plan needs to be updated with some guidelines from NSF as they transition into grants. Please be looking at how this team can make a plan that is a bit more focused on the Arctic and the challenges emerging across the State.
6. Future topics/Roundtable – All, time remaining
  - a. Mark Meyer wrote he had a meeting/workshop at UAF on geologic hydrogen that was co-sponsored by USARC, UAF and the State on October 29-31, 2024. Anupma Prakash added that the geologic hydrogen research was presented by John Farrell and that it's a big topic in discussion for the future as an energy solution. There are other efforts coming up in geologic engineering and human interventions for addressing climate change. There is an upcoming meeting in Boulder on March 23-24, 2025 and will have the Polar Research Board meeting to further the work momentum and what the National Academy of Sciences is doing. Larry Hinzman added that the meeting was inspiring as they considered the potential for exploration and the development of geologic hydrogen and critical minerals. Aimee Devaris with USGS added that the USGS is preparing a geologic hydrogen prospectivity map for North America and they are planning to release it. Nettie added USGS is mapping the contiguous US and will apply that work to Alaska. There is potential for productive work in Alaska with USGS. Mead Treadwell added that it was attended by funders as well, so it's important for the University to figure out what they want to go for. There were also Alaska Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners attending and they have all of the geologic records. There will be work for graduate students. From a policy standpoint, the University needs to think that through too. Paul said the process starts here and a working group will be pulled together over the next 6 months or so. Nettie added that it's imperative that the process starts soon with Paul stepping down, we have a chance to influence the policy. Paul will work on pulling a working group together and start the process. Mead mentioned the Molecular Imaging Conference that is coming up in September 2025. Molecular imaging has been used in different ways in Alaska such as in geophysics as well as diagnostics. There might be an opportunity to present an Alaska showcase so he wanted to share that. Aaron Dotson asked if there will be a broader audience to include APU, Tribal Organizations and UIC Science into the new framework? Paul answered that he doesn't have the answer right now but it will be looked at

from the lens of the new guidelines and thinking about what voices need to be represented. Larry Hinzman suggested that the State guidelines be looked at as they put forth their research priorities. Anupma mentioned the article on the geologic hydrogen workshop and report from the National Academy of Sciences on the moral compass of geoengineering and interventions. Timothy Thomas talked about ANTHC's COBRI award and the research being done across the Tribal Health Organizations; there are 50 different research projects going on now. As staff and consultants are working with the Alaska delegation and lobbyists, please mention the research being done by Tribal Health Organizations. We have robust research departments and a number of physicians and PhD's who do the work. They have the Alaska Native Health Research Conference coming up in the fall of 2025. Most of their funding comes from the National Institutes of Health. Nettie thanked Timothy for his work and talked about a project they are partnering on. She does advocate for ANTHC and she agrees with a broader audience. Paul added they are going to D.C. in February and Timothy should give information to share. Brenda added that Kentucky was another jurisdiction that got a track one and that NSF mentioned that they needed more Tribal representation on the committee and that should be looked at when it gets revamped. In the end, the team thanked Paul for his work and service.

**Additional Documentation:**

[Alaska NSF EPSCoR Update](#)

**Next Meeting:**