Enhancing and Expanding Bioenergetics Research Despite Staff Attrition

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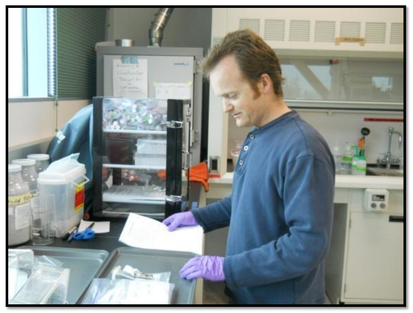
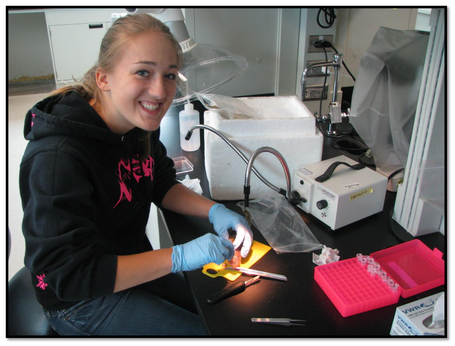
What we do

We focus on forage fish bioenergetics to predict recruitment, assess habitat quality & investigate climate effects on marine ecosystems. This includes field work, wet lab studies and biological and chemical analysis of samples. This work is labor intensive and requires specialized skills.



Benefits to research partners

1. **Career guidance (figuring out what is desirable or not) and networking**
2. **$$$ and increased technical and scientific skills**
3. **Gain first hand knowledge of Alaskan marine research projects and management**



How we get the work done

In the current budget climate we are forced to rely on contracted labor. We focus on early career scientists and our approach is to engage them as research partners rather than sample processors.

Currently we have 7 permanent employees and 13 contracted partners who share research duties. These relationships are beneficial to the partners, staff and our agency. Six partners have brought posters to this meeting.

Benefits to permanent staff

1. **Data collecting & fostering team work**
2. **Learning management techniques**
3. **More frequent data assessment**
4. **Understanding value of mentoring**

Why it works

We design contract tasks that include several activities in addition to collecting & processing samples where partners work closely with staff & each other in teams.

This allows for a feeling of partnership & ownership resulting in increased collaboration, productivity, longevity and commitment to project goals.

Benefits to agency

1. **Supports agency mission despite attrition**
2. **Trains next generation of scientists and managers**
3. **Satisfies agency outreach goals as this model leads to internships & science fair mentoring.**

Permanent staff must learn required skills in contract writing and budgeting. Although this is a significant time consuming task, it enhances project management skills.

The recommendations and general content presented in this poster do not necessarily represent the views or official position of the Department of Commerce, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or the National Marine Fisheries Service.

Alaska Fisheries Science Center
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE – NOAA FISHERIES

Our operating funds are soft, we build in money for contract labor including summer college students.

Research partners include: post docs, grad students and people considering grad school.

Our science fair program feeds into the contract labor pool

Weekly meetings with staff & contractors enhance efficiency and quality