

National Park Service, Alaska Region Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center Strategic Framework 2024-2030

Mission – The Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center promotes stewardship of the marine influenced ecosystems of Alaska’s coastal national parks through learning, education, and research.



NPS Photo by: K. Griffin

LAND & OCEAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center (OASLC) recognizes and honors that the coastal parks of Alaska and their adjacent waters have sustained Alaska Native people for generations. Through stewardship of these lands and waters, these areas continue to sustain the people who call them home. The OASLC is dedicated to doing its part in stewarding these remarkable places and supporting collaborations that can ensure their care for future generations.

RESEARCH LEARNING CENTERS

Research Learning Centers (RLCs) bring research and education together in national parks. They assist researchers, translate research results into a form applicable to management decisions, educate audiences about science, and help park interpreters incorporate science into their programs. Each RLC is distinct, but they all use similar tactics to facilitate and promote park science. All RLCs work in close collaboration with multiple park divisions and science programs and connect with numerous parks and park partners with a mission to increase the effectiveness and communication of science in national parks.

Research Learning Centers envision a world in which national parks are living laboratories, tellers of science narratives, and exemplars of using science to manage resources and enrich visitor, local community, and employee experiences.

INTRODUCTION

The Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center (OASLC) is one of 18 Research Learning Centers established by the National Park Service (NPS) around the country to increase the communication, use, and effectiveness of scientific research being conducted in the national parks. Co-located with Kenai Fjords National Park (KEFJ) in Seward, the OASLC was established in 2001 as a distinct NPS program that works with and supports the 11 NPS coastal parks in Alaska.

Collectively, these 11 parks comprise more than 3,600 miles of Alaska's coastline and more than 32% of the coastline in the entire National Park System. Parks served by the OASLC include:

- Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve
- Bering Land Bridge National Preserve
- Cape Krusenstern National Monument and Preserve
- Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve
- Katmai National Park and Preserve
- Kenai Fjords National Park
- Klondike Goldrush National Historical Park
- Lake Clark National Park and Preserve
- Noatak National Preserve
- Sitka National Historical Park
- Wrangell-St. Elias National Park and Preserve

The mission of the OASLC is to promote stewardship of the marine-influenced ecosystems of Alaska's coastal national parks through education, learning, and research.

To accomplish this mission the OASLC collaborates with partners through outreach and education, shared generational knowledge, science-informed decision making, and scientific and other forms of research. These partners include Alaska's coastal parks, inventory and monitoring (I&M) networks, regional programs, Alaska Native

stewards, and external partners to further marine stewardship related to natural and cultural resources. The OASLC strategically invests and leverages financial resources to augment, strengthen, and support the work being done by these entities to achieve its mission in support of Alaska’s coastal parks.

In recognition of the importance of social and cultural connections to place, the OASLC values and incorporates other ways of knowing into its mission and efforts. The OASLC recognizes that there are many ways of learning and knowing besides the western definition of scientific understanding. The terms Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), generational, and Alaska Native knowledge have been used to describe this relationship. Throughout this document, we will refer to this concept as Indigenous Knowledges. The OASLC honors Alaska Native cultures and the generations of ongoing relationships between people and the environment. The OASLC works to incorporate these important perspectives through collaboration, dialog, and partnerships.

The OASLC strategic plan aligns with the 2021 NPS Arctic-Pacific Ocean Parks Stewardship Strategy (APOSS)¹ and will serve as a guide to meet shared ocean stewardship objectives in Alaska’s coastal parks.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Parks served by the OASLC contain some of the nation’s most outstanding ocean and coastal environments and resources. Ideally, parks are managed to remain unimpaired for future generations. This requires effective, long-term management and conservation strategies that identify, anticipate, and articulate the challenges confronting parks. The National Park Service, Alaska Region Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center Strategic Framework 2024–2030 (the framework) will strengthen and reinforce links between science, management, policy, education, learning, and generational knowledge that underpin tribal, local, state, federal, and international relationships.

This Strategic Framework lists the Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center’s goals and objectives for fiscal years (FY) 2024–2030 and provides five-year targets for accountability. The plan lists the types of actions that may be included in the OASLC’s annual programs of work over the next five years to achieve the goals and objectives. Finally, the strategic plan communicates the OASLC’s goals, objectives, and potential actions to NPS parks and networks, external partners, Alaska Native communities, and the public. This framework was developed by the OASLC Board of Directors in consultation with the NPS and collaborators. The spirit of interdisciplinary collaboration is infused throughout the document.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The guiding principles establish operational standards and values and allow the OASLC to demonstrate how to collectively build a consistent and adaptive approach to planning and decision making. When confronted with an issue or question, the OASLC returns to these guiding principles for direction and clarity. OASLC’s guiding principles were updated during a 2021 workshop with OASLC staff and board members. They reflect the intentions of the OASLC and inform the goals, objectives, and actions in later sections. Our work will:

- Be guided by park priorities, through consideration of the OASLC board.
- Foster collaborative partnerships that contribute to successful projects.
- Balance outreach and education efforts with research needs.
- Promote work on core/common issues that benefit multiple coastal parks.

¹ The purpose of APOSS is to consider the effects of rapidly changing environmental conditions on coastal parks and coordinate a holistic approach to protect resources through partnerships, science, education, and management.

- Leverage existing research and education resources, including generational knowledge, to facilitate work in Alaska’s coastal parks.
- Use measurable targets to guide and improve OASLC programs to accomplish objectives.
- Provide OASLC services to all Alaska coastal parks (following targeted timeline in Objectives below).
- Use the Arctic-Pacific Ocean Stewardship Strategy to guide all levels of OASLC operations.
- Increase the overall capacity (research and education) and interconnectedness of coastal parks.

SHARED COASTAL PRIORITIES

It is a guiding principle that the OASLC will focus its work on shared coastal priorities that benefit multiple coastal parks. Individual park issues are often viewed in isolation, but by fostering a landscape approach, large-scale conservation efforts become more feasible. Changing the perception that coastal issues are confined to coastal parks is also integral to enduring ocean and coastal resource stewardship. Focusing on shared coastal priorities also inspires collaboration and effective uses of limited resources. To serve all coastal parks equitably, the OASLC will stay informed on park issues and respond to associated needs and desires. The following list was developed as part of the 2024 strategic plan update. The OASLC will continue to remain adaptable and adjust to additional emerging issues as appropriate/needed.

- Reference Conditions
 - Baseline natural and cultural
 - Physical dynamics
 - Sea levels
- Environmental Change
 - Ocean acidification
 - Climate change
 - Marine debris
 - Tidewater glacier change
 - Marine Invasive Species
 - Harmful Algal Blooms
 - Ecological community and species response to change
- Human Condition
 - Human connections to the marine environment including but not limited to subsistence activity and present-day socio-economic connections
- Historical Context
 - Documentation and use of Indigenous Knowledges
 - Documentation, preservation, and threats to cultural resources
- Relevancy
 - Engagement
 - All of the above needs to be relevant to the stakeholders and communities served

OASLC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK – GOALS, OBJECTIVES, TARGETS FOR FY 2024–2030

Goal 1 – Partnerships

Identify, develop, and strengthen partnerships that enhance resource science, conservation, and education related to marine and coastal resources.

The OASLC is dedicated to strengthening its partnerships, working towards highly effective collaborations, and supporting new relationships to increase capacity to address coastal issues. Shared knowledge, expanded communication and education opportunities to reach larger audiences are modeled through partnership collaboration and management. Because issues often extend beyond formal boundaries, complementary needs and issues can be addressed in collaboration to leverage meaningful support and address challenges.

Objective 1.1 – Identify emerging issues to address in collaboration with external and diverse interested parties.

Five-Year Target: The OASLC actively tracks shared coastal issues and identifies associated collaborators or associated stakeholders.

Actions include:

- Explore new partnerships and coordinate with existing partnerships to address the research, inventory, and monitoring needs related to development activities.
- Meet with park leadership teams annually to identify emerging issues and park priorities to address and support collaborations with external, diverse stakeholders.

Objective 1.2 – Collaborate with partners on consistent messaging and outreach materials.

Five-Year Target: The OASLC is seen as a valuable resource for up-to-date and accurate messaging and outreach materials that are relevant and available through multiple methods of access.

Actions include:

- Focus messaging and outreach materials around the seven principles of ocean literacy: 1. Earth has one big ocean with many features, 2. The ocean and life in the ocean shape the features of earth, 3. The ocean is a major influence on weather and climate, 4. The ocean makes the earth habitable, 5. The ocean supports a great diversity of life and ecosystems, 6. The ocean and humans are inextricably interconnected, 7. The ocean is largely unexplored.
- Collaboratively develop messaging around shared coastal priorities that the OASLC is addressing and report out to all partners to ensure consistency.
- Partner with subject matter experts to build cultural competencies into marine and coastal stewardship where strong cultural connections can be made to the resource or topic.
- Increase access related to education and marine and coastal resource stewardship by using a diverse array of outreach methods (e.g., hard copy, internet, in person).

Objective 1.3 – Leverage expertise to increase research and outreach capacity of parks/NPS.

Five-Year Target: All Alaska coastal parks recognize and understand the OASLC as a valuable resource to increase research and outreach capacity by connecting parks/NPS with partners.

Actions include:

- Assist parks in connecting with capable partners for communication, outreach, and research (e.g., the Alaska SeaLife Center, the University of Alaska, or other entities). Let current and future needs and capabilities drive the partnerships.
- Identify, fund, and support collaborations between partner organizations and parks.
- Provide support (e.g., financial, capacity building, introductions) for all types of research, including Indigenous Knowledges, and other ways of knowing.
- Support NPS and partners to educate the public about marine and coastal science.

Objective 1.4 – Recognize and capitalize on internal (NPS) programs and existing partnerships to carry out OASLC priority projects more effectively.

Five-Year Target: OASLC staff are active participants in internal programs and partner working groups/organizations/associations.

Actions include:

- Participate in appropriate working groups/organizations/associations to maintain partnership connections.
- Manage partnerships and programs for high quality and timely outcomes to accomplish priority projects.
- Collaborate with the regional programs (e.g., I&M, Coastal Ecologists, Alaska Native Liaison, Relevancy, Diversity, and Inclusion groups) to carry out OASLC priority projects.

Goal 2 – Internal and External Education, Outreach, and Communication

Facilitate and expand opportunities to increase awareness of Alaska’s marine and coastal resources through education, research, and science.

The OASLC is dedicated to developing and delivering high-quality, accessible, and relevant education and outreach that foster long-term stewardship of coastal areas.

Objective 2.1 – Provide appropriate outreach products and engagement tools for public, school, partner, and NPS audiences to expand awareness of NPS coastal and marine resources and issues.

Five-Year Target: All Alaska coastal parks use OASLC marine science materials in products and programs.

Actions include:

- Disseminate research summaries (e.g., bullet points and links to more information) on shared coastal priorities for all NPS personnel.
- Consult with parks and researchers on effective outreach/education components of research projects and in development of communication products associated with research in the parks.
- Support interpretation and education (I&E) staff with the inclusion of quality scientific content in interpretation and outreach efforts. This includes developing resource briefs, shared content web articles, other written media, posters, social media, videos targeting external audiences.
- Convene a meeting with coastal park staff (I&E and resource staff) to 1) identify key issues, 2) develop a communication strategy that will identify key ocean stewardship messages at the region and park level, identify core audience interests, and suggest preferred media approaches, and 3) assess effective outreach and education actions.
- Develop and distribute a regular newsletter/email to share OASLC work, outreach and engagement tools, and marine and coastal resources/issues.

Objective 2.2 – Work with parks to support and expand individual park’s capacity and understanding of marine and coastal issues (internal training/internal capacity).

Five-Year Target: All Alaska coastal parks recognize the OASLC as a valuable resource when it comes to marine and coastal science projects and seek out the OASLC for expertise and assistance in connecting with personnel and processes.

Actions include:

- Train I&E seasonal personnel in ocean literacy principles (see <https://www.marine-ed.org/ocean-literacy/overview>) and include how to communicate science and scientific results to their audiences.
- Meet with Murie Science Learning Center (MSLC) to share annual priorities to create nexus to educational opportunities.
- Leverage other government agency science communication efforts to communicate science and scientific results relating to shared coastal priorities (e.g., coordinate social media posts, partnering for teacher/seasonal employee trainings, collaborative messaging around ocean literacy principles, etc.).
- Attend statewide conferences, Alaska Native community gatherings, fish camps, and/or other activities, as feasible, to participate in the exchange of knowledge regarding the understanding of marine and coastal stewardship.
- Demonstrate the importance of Indigenous Knowledges with park staff and cultivate the understanding of other ways of knowing through their inclusion in OASLC products and programs.

Objective 2.3 – Work with other agencies and partners to sponsor youth and adult education and outreach opportunities focused on park-based marine and ocean research across Alaska.

Five-Year Target: The OASLC supports a diverse range of education and outreach opportunities that provide multiple access points/methods to connect to Alaska’s coastal parks.

Youth and adult audiences are connected to and have robust learning opportunities that foster greater stewardship of NPS coastal parks and resources.

Actions include:

- Work with internal and external partners, and leverage existing efforts whenever possible, to sponsor technical workshops, symposia, and training to enhance local knowledge of ocean issues.
- Support teacher workshops and student activities in parks’ associated communities (e.g., Murie Science Learning Center, village teacher workshops, Wrangell Institute for Science and Environment, National Ocean Sciences Bowl, and Tsunami Bowl).
Work with partners to identify and mitigate barriers to access for youth and adult education and outreach opportunities with solutions focused on diverse delivery methods.

Objective 2.4 – Provide foundational knowledge for ocean/marine/coastal stewardship to all audiences.

Five-Year Target: All audiences that engage with OASLC materials, products, and programs gain foundational knowledge of ocean/marine/coastal stewardship.

Actions include:

- Support park research dissemination to scientific audiences through talks, posters, and exhibit spaces at scientific conferences such as the Alaska Marine Science Symposium, Alaska Forum for the Environment, Marine Mammal Conference, etc.
- Leverage park networks and efforts with rural schools and assess community needs to provide education about coastal and marine resources (e.g., through village outreach, distance learning, etc.).

- Provide foundational knowledge for ocean/marine/coastal stewardship to NPS staff.
- Work with tribal partners to explore other forms of knowledge associated with ocean/marine/coastal stewardship and incorporate this into communication products and efforts.

Goal 3 – Professional Pathways to Science, Education, and Stewardship

Invest in and implement creative and effective approaches to increase professional pathways in marine and coastal stewardship.

The OASLC seeks to create meaningful ways for students and early career professionals to gain access to opportunities and career positions focused on protecting marine and coastal resources through science and education.

Objective 3.1 – Foster and facilitate professional experience opportunities for early-career researchers and educators.

Five-Year Target: The OASLC supports professional experience opportunities for early-career researchers and educators.

Actions include:

- Work with universities to promote career development programs for Alaska’s coastal parks such as the Research Experiences for Undergraduates Program (National Science Foundation), NOAA’s Sea Grant Program, the Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program, Geoscientists-in-the-Parks, the Nearshore Monitoring Program, and additional programs.
- Provide and support internships related to marine and coastal parks for educators (i.e., Bear Otter Clam Project in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, boat internship program).
- Expand intern opportunities where parks can provide necessary support (e.g., supervision and housing).
- Provide opportunities for Alaska’s NPS academy interns to learn about and experience the work of the OASLC and its supported coastal parks.
- Use and advocate for the use of diverse hiring authorities to fill positions at the OASLC and Alaska coastal parks.

Objective 3.2 – Use the OASLC network of multi-divisional expertise to provide cross-divisional learning and growth opportunities for existing employees.

Five-Year Target: OASLC supports a diverse range of learning and growth opportunities for its staff and its NPS collaborators.

Actions include:

- Develop and /or implement engagement tools to encourage retention in and meaningful inclusion in NPS programs and opportunities.
- Encourage professional development among existing staff to help support knowledge of research, education principles, audience engagement, cultural competencies, etc. based on staff members’ needs.
- Provide training opportunities, such as seasonal training or training incorporated into the Interpretation and Education Advisory Group annual meeting, for Alaska region NPS educators on an annual basis.

Objective 3.3 – Facilitate exposure to marine career opportunities for young students—K–12.

Five-Year Target: All K–12 students within the OASLC sphere of influence have had the opportunity to interact and engage with marine career opportunities.

Actions include:

- Facilitate opportunities to take young students (K–12) into the field to experience marine and coastal career opportunities.
- Provide opportunities for students to interact and engage with researchers, NPS programs, and marine careers (i.e., OASLC and parks in the classroom, distance education programs, etc.).
- Participate in student workshops and support internships related to marine careers.
- Work with local schools to inspire and train young scientists.

Objective 3.4 – Engage villages, communities, and Alaska Native organizations to provide opportunities for development and recruitment of local individuals into NPS science, management, and educational positions.

Five-Year Target: Provide resources and support to mitigate barriers to diverse inclusion in science and conservation internships and career opportunities.

Actions include:

- Provide resources to parks on hiring authorities and other opportunities to develop and recruit local individuals into NPS science, management, and educational positions.
- Explore diverse options and venues for local individuals to engage in NPS science, management, and educational work.
- Develop and/or implement engagement tools that mitigate barriers to access and increase meaningful participation in NPS programs and opportunities.

Goal 4 – Management

Support and enhance park and regional management decisions related to marine and coastal ecosystems and functions, recognizing OASLC's ability to share a broader understanding of coastal concerns.

Effective ocean resource stewardship requires the work of multiple divisions within the national park units served by the OASLC. The following objectives identify ways OASLC can work together with parks to accomplish long-term stewardship goals.

Objective 4.1 – Support and increase the use of marine science in park management decisions through the most current and relevant science-based synthesis with traditional knowledge.

Five-Year Target: Ensure every substantial decision in Alaska coastal parks regarding marine management has the best science available.

Actions include:

- Use a diversity of science, traditions, and knowledge as they relate to management and marine issues.
- Work with the I&M program and other regional programs to identify how science is used and could be used to inform management decisions.
- Collaboratively work with other agencies and the research community to identify and initiate targeted studies to enhance understanding of mitigation measures humans can take to respond to specific threats to natural and cultural resources as well as responses to global climate change variables (e.g., sea level rise, increasing ocean temperature, marine debris, and changing storm frequencies and intensity).
- Working with the Ocean and Coastal Programs Coordinator, I&M, and other NPS programs and staff, use existing knowledge (e.g., data sets, watershed condition assessments, technical reports, etc.) to identify gaps in resource knowledge. Identify commonalities spanning multiple parks.

- In advance of upcoming general planning processes, ask superintendents and planning managers what support and information are needed to be successful.

Objective 4.2 – Support activities that multiply the OASLC’s influence and impact on management decisions.

Five-Year Target: All Alaska coastal parks use OASLC science, programs, products, and recommendations when making management decisions.

Actions include:

- Improve efforts to more effectively influence management decisions (e.g., oil spills, ocean acidification).
- Partner with other agencies to convene workshops to identify common stewardship responsibilities, marine resource threats, research and inventory and monitoring needs, and environmentally sensitive marine and coastal resources.
- Annually evaluate shared coastal priorities and activities to include new emergent issues affecting most or all coastal parks.

Objective 4.3 – Engage parks annually to highlight the top three marine and coastal management and research priorities to provide a point of focus for the year as well as potential priorities in future years.

Five-Year Target: The top three marine and coast management and research priorities are identified and understood by the OASLC and all Alaska coastal parks.

Actions include:

- Meet with superintendents annually to identify the top three marine and coastal management and research priorities.
- Engage with the region to determine the urgency of the emergent issues and the coastal management and research priorities.
- Upon priority identification, develop messages and communication tools/programs that address the priorities.

Goal 5 – Indigenous Knowledges, Research, and Science

Promote and facilitate innovative and inclusive research to increase understanding of marine and coastal resources.

The OASLC recognizes the full range of disciplines in scientific fields that play a vital role in the stewardship and management of coastal and marine NPS resources.

Objective 5.1 – Continue to support marine and coastal scientific research that is relevant to Alaska coastal parks while emphasizing shared coastal priorities and strategic knowledge gaps.

Five-Year Target: All Alaska coastal parks recognize the OASLC as a source of support for marine science projects.

Five-Year Target: Science that is supported by OASLC is used for park management to address shared coastal priorities and strategic knowledge gaps.

Actions include:

- Identify gaps in present research and science to proactively support future needs.
- Create a compilation of marine and coastal issues from parks.
- Providing for the OASLC funding call for proposals.
- Inform parks/networks of non-OASLC funding opportunities to support research, inventory and monitoring, and education programs.

Objective 5.2 – Support research/science projects that reflect a diversity of science, traditions, and Indigenous Knowledges.

Five-Year Target: Research/science projects supported by the OASLC reflect a diversity of science, traditions, and Alaska Native knowledge.

Actions include:

- Engage the public in marine and coastal programs to support and enhance resource knowledge and address research gaps (e.g., the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team program, marine debris, and marine invasive species programs, coastal BioBlitz).
- Ensure requests for scientific or educational research proposals submitted to the OASLC reflect a diversity of science, traditions, and Alaska Native knowledge.
- Share resources and examples of projects that highlight a diversity of science, traditions, and Indigenous Knowledges with researchers and project managers during the Request for Proposals process.

Objective 5.3 – Facilitate and support parks to create a collaborative environment that contributes to effective research, connecting scientific resources, universities, tribal partners, and others to marine and coastal research priorities.

Five-Year Target: All Alaska coastal parks will access OASLC assistance to increase capacity and partnerships to conduct marine scientific research to address park needs.

Actions include:

- Provide support staff to parks to further park coastal and marine projects.
- Assist parks by providing or helping to connect them with technical support for research, inventory, and monitoring.
- Assist parks by collaborating in writing grant proposals that cover multiple parks.
- Through the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), work with coastal parks, and I&M networks, and Regional Office staff to identify and maintain a collective list of coastal and marine research questions related to park coastal and marine resources in the Alaska Region.
- Use the list of priority research needs to attract researchers to conduct research in parks.
- Use the list of priority research needs to help college and graduate students develop successful proposals for research projects in parks.
- Facilitate and enhance communication between the NPS and the broader research community, including academia and other research agencies (e.g., United States (US) Geological Survey, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Alaska Ocean Observing System, North Pacific Research Board, US Fish and Wildlife Service), on marine science to better understand and manage park resources.

Goal 6 – Learning

Co-create a learning environment, in consultation with communities we live and work with, to improve mutual understanding of marine and coastal resources.

The OASLC recognizes the important value of sharing and exchanging knowledge between local Alaska Native communities, students, and scientists to create holistic bodies of knowledge and further support the stewardship of marine and coastal areas upon which all livelihoods depend.

Objective 6.1 – Provide training opportunities for NPS staff and interested parties to expand understanding and literacy of marine and coastal environments of Alaska coastal parks.

Five-Year Target: The OASLC is recognized as a source of marine science information and training that supports a holistic approach to marine and coastal stewardship.

Actions include:

- Provide training opportunities to NPS staff and interested parties to expand knowledge of the seven ocean literacy principles.
- Work with internal and external partners, leveraging existing efforts whenever possible, to sponsor technical workshops, symposia, webinars, and training to enhance local knowledge of ocean issues.

Objective 6.2 – Create the space for relationship building, cultural relevancy, and diverse learning styles.

Five-Year Target: OASLC staff and partners feel capable/empowered/encouraged to actively engage in conversation, knowledge sharing, and relationship building in respectful environments.

Actions include:

- Engage with our diverse NPS staff, resource groups, and partners to help inform work with associated communities.
- Ensure that all materials and products will be designed to meet the accessibility needs of our audiences. Use tools and/or technology to help address barriers to access.
- Support and enhance scientific communication between coastal parks and local communities with strong ties to parks or park resources and with other local audiences, such as through workshops, meetings, symposia (e.g., Beringia Days, Alaska Forum for the Environment, etc.).
- Provide resources (e.g., time, money, etc.) to support learning of cultural competencies in parks.

Objective 6.3 – Partner with Native Alaska partners and communities to foster relationships to ensure that our understanding of marine and coastal issues and research, are inclusive of their insights, knowledge, and sensitive to their concerns.

Five-Year Target: OASLC staff actively collaborate with Native Alaska partners and communities to create mutual understanding and trust around marine and coastal issues and research.

Actions include:

- Support the Alaska Native Liaison or appropriate program/group in developing a document focused on how to collaborate with Alaska Native communities when doing research. For example, refer to the model developed through Science and Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit Research and Meaningful Engagement of Northern Indigenous Communities.
- Provide trainings for OASLC staff in cultural competencies in general. For example, trainings regarding appropriate and meaningful collaborations with tribal partners in Alaska.

Objective 6.4 – Co-create an OASLC learning environment that identifies and shares best practices through engaging activities.

Five-Year Target: Use OASLC networks to share a diversity of science, traditions, and Alaska Native knowledge resources.

Five-Year Target: Promote co-creation of materials with Alaska Native communities and integrate a diversity of science, traditions, and Indigenous Knowledges into developed resources.

Actions include:

- Ensure that “best practices” are most up-to-date, inclusive, and relevant.
- Support NPS staff in collaborating with Alaska Native communities to have a positive impact on marine and coastal resource stewardship.
- Include NPS education staff in OASLC teacher workshops as feasible.
- Promote and support NPS learning and outreach for marine and coastal resources.
- Begin developing guidance on supporting researcher communication with communities before, during, and after research takes place. As a best practice, require research be brought back to the communities in which it was done.
- Create and share annual report of OASLC work highlighting initiatives and projects that address shared coastal priorities.

IMPLEMENTATION

Governance and Coordination

The OASLC is governed by a seven-member board of directors chartered in 2013 and led by an elected chair. Voting members of the board include three superintendents (each serving a 3-year rotation) representing coastal parks within the Western Arctic parklands, Southwest Alaska Network, and Southeast Alaska Network; the region’s ocean and coastal programs coordinator; and a regional-level expert in interpretation. Nonvoting board members include the Kenai Fjords National Park superintendent and the OASLC director. The board meets at least once annually, provides program guidance for strategic planning, and promotes accountability and effectiveness for OASLC operations and programs. The OASLC director serves as staff to the board.

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) provides technical assistance and advice to the OASLC board and director. The TAC includes representatives of natural resource managers, cultural resource managers, and interpretation/education staff, and is chaired by the OASLC director. The ocean and coastal programs coordinator position on the board of directors serves as a liaison to the TAC. The TAC works with the director to advise on how the OASLC mission can be achieved and for monitoring and measuring progress toward established goals and objectives. The board and TAC will hold one joint meeting per year.

The OASLC will routinely communicate and coordinate with the region’s regional science communication specialist and other NPS personnel to facilitate achievement of its mission and goals and to ensure efficiency and effectiveness. The ocean and coastal programs coordinator is a member of the OASLC board, which will facilitate this coordination. The OASLC will also participate in Natural Resource Advisory Council, Cultural Resources Advisory Council, and the Educational Advisory Group meetings to develop and coordinate opportunities to meet its goals across the region.

Budget and Capacity

The strategic framework was developed assuming a stable budget projection for FY 2024–2030, with incremental increases due to the expected federal budget.

In FY 2021, the OASLC has three full-time staff, including a director, education coordinator, and science communication specialist. About 47% of OASLC’s budget pays for its staff. Base funding provided to Kenai Fjords National Park covers the center’s overhead and administrative costs. Approximately 50% of the OASLC budget is available annually to support activities that accomplish the mission.

Annual Work Plan

The OASLC director will work with the TAC and others to develop an annual work plan that identifies specific accomplishments and products, responsible parties, schedule/deadlines, an OASLC program budget, and additional funding sources. The work plan will also include more specific annual targets to meet the general five-year targets provided under each goal/objective above. The draft work plan will be presented to the board of directors for discussion, modification, and approval no later than November 30th each year.

Request for Proposals Call

As part of its work plan, the OASLC will hold a Request for Proposals. The amount of funding allocated to this call will be determined as the budget is constructed each year to best achieve objectives for each fiscal year. The success of the funding call will be evaluated each year and adapted as necessary.

The funding call will be targeted to one or more priority coastal issue(s) that a majority or all coastal parks face. An emphasis will be placed on funding fewer, larger projects that address these issues in multiple parks. The board will consult with coastal park superintendents about the order in which to address the shared coastal priorities in the Request for Proposals calls.

Projects will be selected for funding based on merit and clearly defined criteria. The Request for Proposals call will not pre-identify an allocation between I&E and research projects. The relative balance of funding provided for I&E and research projects will be evaluated within the context of the entire OASLC work plan and adjusted as necessary over time.

Funding provided through the Request for Proposals call must be used within the designated fiscal years.

Annual Report and Other Communications

The OASLC director will work with the TAC and others to develop an annual report that details specific accomplishments and products, lessons learned, coordination with others, and a budget summary. A detailed accounting of all OASLC expenditures will be appended. The proposed annual report will be presented to the board of directors for discussion, modification, and approval. The OASLC will distribute the approved annual report to all Alaska coastal parks and post it on the OASLC website by November 30 of each year. The annual report will include updates regarding the accomplishments of goals outlined in the strategy. Board members have been chosen to represent the coastal parks, and park superintendents and staff are encouraged to communicate with them regarding OASLC operations. NPS staff and partners are encouraged to communicate directly with the OASLC director and staff on an informal basis throughout the year.

Program Review

Beginning at the end of FY 2017 and every four years following, the board will direct a comprehensive program review to evaluate OASLC accomplishments and products, data management, fiscal management, and staffing. The review will be the responsibility of the board, who will consider inviting assistance from an evaluator external to the organization. The program review will provide the primary basis for any significant changes in program direction and will identify issues to address in developing the next five-year strategic plan. The board will also evaluate its structure and function at that time.