

NYSG's Knauss Fellow Spreads Ocean Optimism Internationally

Celebrating 50 Years
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Coastal Communities
1966-2016

In an era of rising seas and climate challenges, **Erin Eastwood's** catch phrase remains: ocean optimism. And growing up in southern California, it's no wonder that she's ready to dive into her new position as International Partnership Fellow with NOAA Research's Climate Program Office, where she was placed February 1 as New York Sea Grant's 2016 Knauss Fellow.

Erin's unique spot at NOAA offers her a cross-line office experience, as well as the ability to sit on interagency working groups alongside international agencies such as USAID with her boss and mentor, Meredith Muth, who was Virginia Sea Grant's 2010 Knauss Fellow. One of their goals is to help the Climate Program Office develop an international strategy to help coasts prepare for climate change.

Erin is well-suited for international work. After participating in field work on carbon sequestration in the Peruvian Amazon rainforest canopy, her Master's thesis (awarded from Columbia University) on population dynamics of coral reef species in Fiji brought her back to the Pacific, where her undergraduate work included ecology of Australia's rainforests and reefs.

"Fiji has its unique climate challenges," says Erin. "We looked at fishery-targeted species from a genetic standpoint, and determined how populations from different marine protected areas in the country are

connected to each other. This 'connectivity' plays a role in how resilient marine reserve networks are in the face of climate change, and can help inform decisions made on the ground." Erin remains optimistic that with proper management, environmental and economic interests do not have to be mutually exclusive.

Despite or maybe because of all the travel to exotic coasts, Erin also has a great desire to communicate the science. That's where her experience with blogging, writing TED Ed lessons, and running the Twitter account for the Society for Conservation Biology kicks in. "I was interested in making the journal's scientific publications accessible to the broader public as well as scientific audiences." To this end, she created a fun video tutorial for scientists, showing how to compose a "tweetable abstract" – that is, the 140-character version.

Good luck, Erin. As New York Sea Grant's 2016 Knauss Fellow, we hope to follow your ocean optimism along with your future endeavors.

— Barbara A. Branca



Erin Eastwood, doing research in Fiji on marine protected areas.
Photo courtesy of Erin Eastwood

About the Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship

The Sea Grant Knauss Fellowship provides a unique educational and professional experience to graduate students who have an interest in ocean, coastal and Great Lakes resources and in the national policy decisions affecting those resources.

The Fellowship, named after one of Sea Grant's founders, former NOAA Administrator, John A. Knauss, matches highly qualified graduate students with "hosts" in the legislative and executive branch of government located in the Washington, D.C. area, for a one year paid fellowship.