

# FINAL WORKSHOP REPORT

## BACKYARD BUOYS CO-PRODUCTION WORKSHOP

August 16-17, 2022



***Hosted By***

Barrow Whaling Captains Association

Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission

Alaska Ocean Observing System



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Backyard Buoys Co-Production Workshop was held at the Ebson Hopson Middle School and the Iñupiat Heritage Center in Utqiagvik, Alaska on August 16-17, 2022. Backyard Buoys brings together geographically, academically, institutionally, and culturally diverse groups of partners: 1) three U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) Regional Associations, 2) Indigenous partners in each region, 3) a proven ocean wave buoy developer, and 4) educational partners.

- **Alaska:** Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS), Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (AEWC), University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF), Alaska Department of Natural Resources (ADNR), and Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP).
- **Pacific Northwest:** Northwest Association of Networked Ocean Observing Systems (NANOOS), Quileute Tribe, Quinault Indian Nation, Western Washington University (WWU).
- **Pacific Islands:** Pacific Islands Ocean Observing System (PacIOOS), Marshall Islands Conservation Society (MICS), National Park of American Samoa (NPSA), Hawai'i Sea Grant, Conservation International Hawai'i.
- **Sofar Ocean Technologies**

The goals of the workshop were to discuss the best approach to implement the wave buoy program in communities and to develop meaningful methods and approaches of co-production/co-design for use in other programs.



*Spotter wave buoy near bowhead whale skull in front of Iñupiat Heritage Center.  
Photo credit: Duncan Mactavish, Sofar Ocean.*

## ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKSHOP

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Because there was only one commercial flight a day into Utqiagvik at the time of the workshop, the schedule was designed to allow participants to arrive on Tuesday August 16 and depart on Wednesday August 17. The schedule was also designed around the needs of the whaling captains who are preparing for the fall bowhead whale subsistence harvest.

The workshop included a technical presentation on the deployment and use of the wave buoy in both evening and morning sessions. The agenda allowed substantial time for respectful dialogue on community members' concerns and needs (Appendix A), as well as a tour of Utqiagvik. The workshop also benefited from a remote call in from Dr. Rick Spinrad, the NOAA Administrator who was visiting Alaska during this workshop, as well as the attendance of the Honorable Mayor of the North Slope Borough (NSB), Mr. Harry Brower, Jr. and Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Alaska Regional Director, Dr. James Kendall.



***Backyard Buoy Co-Production Workshop Discussion. Top: Evening session at Ebson Hopson Middle School; Bottom: Morning session at Iñupiat Heritage Center.***

***Photo credit: Carol Janzen, AOOS.***

## PARTICIPANTS

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### IOOS Regional Associations

Jan Newton, NANOOS Director  
Melissa Iwamoto, PacIOOS Director  
Jordan Watson, PacIOOS Deputy Director  
Sheyna Wisdom, AOOS Director  
Carol Janzen, AOOS Director of Operations  
Jill Prewitt, AOOS Regional Data Sharing Coordinator  
Megan Onders, AOOS Director of Engagement  
Ashley Peiffer, IOOS Association

### Indigenous Partners

Harry Brower Jr., North Slope Borough Mayor and Barrow Whaling Captain  
Raymond Seetok, Wales Whaling Captain  
Peter Ozenna, Diomedede Whaling Captain  
Devon Koonooka-Apataiki, Gambell Whaling Captain  
Herbert Ipalook, Sr., Nuiqsut Whaling Captain  
Steven Rexford II, Barrow Whaling Captain  
Lloyd Kanayruyak, Barrow Whaling Captain  
Ross Wilhelm, Barrow Whaling Captain

Jamie Okomailak, Barrow Whaling Captain  
Pua Tuaua, National Park of American Samoa

Jennifer Hagen, Quileute Tribe  
Lesley Hopson, AVEC Director  
Isabel Elavgak, AVEC Executive Assistant  
Jaylene Hopson, AVEC Assistant

### Technology

Sebastien Boulay, Buoy consultant  
Duncan Mactavish, Sofar Ocean

### Education/Research

Beth Spangler, ANSEP  
Eloise Brown, UAF  
Seth Danielson, UAF  
Alice Bailey, UAF

### Guests

James Kendall, BOEM Alaska Regional Director  
Christina Bonsell, BOEM Alaska  
Leandra DeSousa, NSB



***Backyard Buoys team at Barrow Airport. Photo credit AOOS. (not all participants pictured)***

## MAIN OUTCOMES OF THE WORKSHOP

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After two years of virtual meetings, the most important outcome of this workshop was coming together to meet in person! The cultural diversity of this project is illustrated by the list of points of origin of participants: American Samoa, New Zealand, Washington (La Push and Seattle), Oregon, Hawai'i, and from around Alaska (Gambell, Wales, Diomedede, Nuiqsut, Utqiagvik, Fairbanks, Anchorage, Juneau). Of particular importance was bringing together Indigenous people from the different regions. Despite the very different environments for each coastal community, there are many common concerns, needs, and solutions across the geographic scope of the project.

The take home messages from this workshop are listed below.

- Data doesn't necessarily need to be public for everyone – be respectful of different people's needs.
- Data needs to be as close to real time as possible because weather changes fast!
- Consider all options for the sharing of data – app on phone, VHF transmission, InReach, AIS.
- Establish a facility and perhaps a person in the community to be a point of contact **IN** the community. Don't just leave after a few years!
- Interested in temperature and currents, not just waves.
- Education is key to success and sustainability, especially education opportunities linked to Traditional Knowledge and the native language in each community.
- Make sure this is sustainable – through IOOS or other funding!
- This wave buoy and app are just one tool to use for marine safety – this just augments what is already done by coastal communities.
- In-person meetings are essential for building trusted relationships.
- It is worth having a very simple 1-pager to send and share to any future meeting attendees beforehand. To make sure everyone understands the goal and methodology for this project. In order to avoid spending too much time 'defending' our intentions. And making sure this is not another research project.
- Trust. Some communities will have issues with trusting us, as they may have been lied to / misled in the past, supporting research projects that ended up affecting them negatively.
- Be sure the community understands that this is not a typical research project.
- The power of connecting the Indigenous communities from the three regions.
- Engage the younger members of the communities as well as the elders.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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The decision to host a workshop in mid-August was made in mid-July; therefore, there wasn't a lot of time to organize this workshop. We acknowledge the incredible level of effort it took to arrange the travel, set up meeting space, and keep everyone housed and fed, particularly when flights were delayed due to weather for two extra days. We thank the work of the AEWC staff Lesley Hopson, Isabel Elavgak, Jaylene Hopson, and Jenny Evans for all their great work! Participants stayed at the Top of the World Hotel. The front-desk personnel were amazingly efficient, patient, and flexible with all the changes due to the flight delays.

We also thank those who traveled far and wide to come to Utqiagvik in August, including whaling captains and crews from Wales (Raymond and Deborah Seetok), Diomedede (Peter Ozenna), Gambell (Devon Koonoka-Apataiki), and Nuiqsut (Herbert Ipalook, Sr.); Pua and Ruth Tuaua from American Samoa; and Jennifer Hagen from La Push, WA. We humbly thank you for sharing your gift of time and knowledge.

# APPENDIX A

## AGENDA

### Backyard Buoys Co-Production Workshop

#### Utqiagvik, AK

**DAY 1: 6:00 – 9:00 pm, Tuesday, August 16, 2022 at Ebson Hopson Middle School**

**DAY 2: 9:00 am-12:00 pm, Wednesday, August 17, 2022 at Iñupiat Heritage Center**

#### **Day 1**

- 1) Arrivals – Refreshments and sandwiches dinner provided
- 2) Welcome (Lesley Hopson)
- 3) Invocation (Raymond Seetok)
- 4) Background & Overview of Workshop (Sheyna Wisdom)
  - a) Project background and funding
  - b) Understanding of different needs for different communities and regions
- 5) Introductions (Sheyna Wisdom)
  - a) Introduce project team members — what do they hope to get out of the workshop
  - b) Introduce guests — what do they hope to get out of the workshop
- 6) Implementation & Deployment of Wave Buoys
  - a) Wave Buoy overview - Sofar Ocean
  - b) Challenges
  - c) Next steps
- 7) Wrap-up Day 1
- 8) Adjournment

#### **Day 2**

- 1) Arrivals - Refreshments available
- 2) Welcome (Lesley Hopson)
- 3) Invocation (Raymond Seetok)
- 4) Introductions (Sheyna Wisdom)
  - a) Dr. Rick Spinrad, NOAA Administrator (virtual call in)
  - b) Mr. Harry Brower, Jr., Mayor of the North Slope Borough
- 5) Co-Production Discussion
- 6) Adjournment
- 7) Lunch catered
- 8) Tour of Heritage Center
- 9) Tour of Utqiagvik & visit to boat launch area (shuttle provided)

**WHAT TO EXPECT  
(provided to attendees)**

**Location:** Utqiagvik, AK

**About Utqiagvik:**

Utqiagvik is the economic, transportation and administrative center for the North Slope Borough. Located on the Chukchi Sea coast, Utqiagvik is the northernmost community in the United States. Traditionally, the community is known as Ukpeagvik, “place where snowy owls are hunted.” Utqiagvik was incorporated as a first-class city in 1959. The largest city in the North Slope Borough, Utqiagvik is home to 4,933 residents (as of 2015), of which 63 percent are Iñupiat. The word “Iñupiat” means “the real people.” The Iñupiat have inhabited the Arctic for thousands of years, traditionally following animal migrations and subsisting on whale, caribou, walrus, seal, and birds.

In one of the earth’s most challenging environments, the Iñupiaq have developed a rich culture and dynamic array of traditions. Their survival depended on close family ties, a strong sense of community and a deep respect for nature. One of our primary traditions is Kivgiq, the Messenger Feast wherein all villages celebrate the harvest, trade, and renew kinship and partnerships.

Today, the Iñupiaq still look to the land for cultural and economic sustenance. Despite changes in technology and lifestyle, they rely on whaling, hunting and fishing for cultural identity and much of their food supply. Of all subsistence activities, whaling is the most important to coastal Indigenous villages. When a whaling captain lands a bowhead whale, the entire community comes together for sharing and celebration. During Nalukataq (the celebration held after the harvest of a whale, also called the Blanket Toss), hundreds of people gather to share in the feast, participate in games and enjoy Iñupiaq dancing. Other resources are just as important to inland communities such as Anaktuvuk Pass and Atkasuk. Caribou, fish, sheep, berries are a few of the many resources the land provides and are shared amongst villages.

**Cell/Internet:**

Although the village has access to internet and cell service, the speed and availability varies dependent on the carrier. T-Mobile and Verizon do not work effectively in Alaska’s northern villages.

**Alcohol is prohibited:**

**Utqiagvik bans the sale of alcoholic beverages.** Additionally, the Top of the World Hotel has very strict no-alcohol and no-smoking policies. Room occupants will be held directly responsible for any fines associated with any violations of the hotel’s no-alcohol and no-smoking policies.

**Information regarding purchase and export of Alaska Native Art handicrafts:**

Local Alaska Native crafts may be available to purchase. Typically artists wish to be paid in cash for their work. If you plan to purchase any crafts, you may wish to bring cash and read the information regarding exportation of Alaska Native art. Vendors in Alaska sell a number of different handicrafts that are regulated under domestic and international law (including the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species). These species involved include marine mammals, bears, furbearers, and birds, inter alia. Foreign attendees considering

purchase of souvenirs for export in personal baggage are encouraged to consult with following websites for information:

[https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/iacb\\_alaska\\_ivory\\_brochure\\_2017\\_web.pdf](https://www.doi.gov/sites/doi.gov/files/uploads/iacb_alaska_ivory_brochure_2017_web.pdf)  
<http://www.law.alaska.gov/department/civil/consumer/Nativeart.html>.

Attendees with specific questions or who require more information can contact the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Import/Export Office in Anchorage at +1 (907) 271-6198. Attendees are also encouraged to check with appropriate authorities in their home countries to ensure they comply with any domestic requirements, as well.

**Gifts:**

It is not necessary to bring gifts for community members. However, if you choose to bring gifts, small tokens representing your community/culture would be appropriate. If you choose to bring gifts, it would be appropriate to provide a gift to the president of the Barrow Whaling Captains' Association (Michael Donovan), the chairman of the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission (Crawford Patkotak (Pot-ko-tauk)), and the Mayor of the North Slope Borough (Harry Brower, Jr.).

**Weather:**

In mid-August, temperatures typically range in the mid-30s to mid-40s with a chance of rain and snow at all times! The sunrise is at 5:12 am and the sunset is 11:45pm (18 hours and 33 minutes of daylight).

**Clothes to Wear:**

We recommend you wear sturdy shoes (hiking boots) or waterproof boots, as the streets aren't paved, so you will be potentially walking in mud if it rains or snows. The dress code is pretty casual, with most people wearing jeans, button down or t-shirts, hoodie or sweatshirt, and a warm waterproof jacket. We do not recommend bringing an arctic parka for this time of year, but do recommend having a warm hat and gloves in your pockets at all times. It is always good to dress in layers so that you can remove or put on to adjust to the ever-changing weather!

**What to Bring:**

There are lots of opportunities for wildlife viewing, from whales, seals, polar bears to birds, foxes, and caribou. So bring binoculars and a camera! Utqiagvik is home to many artists who make stunning jewelry, sculptures, and other artwork using their natural resources.

**Getting Around:**

The Backyard Buoys team have arranged for a shuttle to transport people from the airport, hotel, and workshop locations. There are taxis around Utqiagvik:

Alaska Taxi 907-852-3000

Barrow Taxi 907-52-222

City Cab 907-852-5050

Arctic Cab 907-852-2227

**What to Do:**

If you choose to stay longer than the workshop or have other visitors with you, there are a few tour operators around town.

Tundra Tours <https://www.tundratoursinc.com/tours>

<https://www.alaska.org/destination/utqiagvik/day-tours>

### **Important Phone Numbers**

- **Sheyna Wisdom:** +1 (907) 748-5864
- **Jenny Evans:** +1 (907) 727-2585
- **Lesley Hopson:** +1 (907) 852-1455
- **Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission Office:** +1 (907) 852-2392
- **Iñupiat Heritage Center:** +1 (907) 852-0422
- **Top of the World Hotel:** +1 (907) 852-3900

### **Cultural Awareness:**

The Iñupiaq have survived on the North Slope for thousands of years. Oral narratives are used to share the teachings of one's ancestors and the values that have been passed on through generations. The Inupiat philosophy holds that each person is responsible to all others for the survival of the culture, values, and traditions. Inupiat values embody knowledge of the language, sharing, cooperation, respect for elders, love for children, knowledge of one's family tree, the importance of family roles, respect for nature, spirituality, humor, hunter success, domestic skills, and humility.

Respectful communication is essential to healthy relationships with local residents and our colleagues. Here are some tips to assist in cross-cultural communication.

Alaska Natives have several communication patterns. Generally, the pace of speech and way of life are slower when compared to other societies. Communications may often be in the form of a story. There are pronounced moments of silence, which is a very important part of the communication style. The loudness of a speaker is essential, as volume of speech conveys importance. Alaska Natives may often speak in soft tones. Respect is shown when people are allowed to finish what they are saying. Interruptions can be perceived as rudeness.

Body language of the Alaska Native people also varies from other cultures. Downcast eyes when speaking is a sign of respect. However, some North Slope Residents are accustomed to Western communication styles and will make direct eye contact. Raised eyebrows are often a sign of agreement. A furrowed or close-knit brow when listening to another person talk can be a display of concern or a way to show one is paying attention. Unlike in other cultures, this is not an indication that a person is angry or irritated. Please keep these tips in consideration to assure effective and respectful communication. Above all, LISTENING IS KEY TO LEARNING AND DEVELOPING A RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIP!