

Steve Martell

As a member of the Science Review Panel (SRP) for the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program, I have reviewed and I approve of this budget reallocation request. The proposed reallocation of funds will support important data collection and science synthesis efforts that will provide GWA LTRM improved continuity from the previous 5-year funding period and allow GWA to better meet their overall objectives for this current funding period (which the GWA SRP approved). Although, this proposed budget reallocation would increase the in-kind workload of current NOAA staff Program Lead (Ms. Lindeberg) and Science Lead (Dr. Suryan), I am confident that the well established and efficiently run GWA Program Management Team and the GWA program overall will adapt to this challenge.

Mike Sigler

I am a member of the Science Review Panel (SRP) for the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program. I support this budget reallocation request. The proposed reallocation of funds will support important data collection and science synthesis, and will improve continuity with the previous 5-year funding period. Overall, GWA will better meet their overall objectives for this current funding period, which the GWA SRP approved. This proposed budget reallocation would increase the in-kind workload of current NOAA staff Program Lead (Ms. Lindeberg) and Science Lead (Dr. Suryan). However, I am confident that the well established GWA Program Management Team and the GWA program overall will meet this challenge.

Terrie Klinger

I have served as a member of the Science Review Panel (SRP) for the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program for 10 years. I am familiar with the program, its consistent productivity, and the important benefits it provides to citizens of Alaska.

I have reviewed the budget reallocation request and approve the request as submitted. The proposed reallocation provides the best scenario to maximize outcomes of the program, including continued collection of critical data and synthesis across multiple data streams.

Notably, the proposed budget reallocation will increase the in-kind workload of the NOAA staff Program Lead (Ms. Lindeberg) and Science Lead (Dr. Suryan). Given their outstanding past performance and that of the GWA Program Management Team as a whole, I am confident this change can be navigated successfully.

Yumi Arimitsu

As a Principal Investigator (PI) for the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program, I have reviewed and I approve of this budget reallocation request. My specific involvement includes Lead for the Pelagic Component that includes four projects receiving re-allocation funds (if approved) and as a co-PI on three of these; the Integrated Predator-Prey Surveys, Aerial Forage Fish Surveys, and Pelagic Component Synthesis. The proposed reallocation of funds will support important data collection and science synthesis efforts that will provide GWA LTRM improved continuity from the previous 5-year funding period and allow GWA to better meet our overall objectives for this current funding period. The objectives outlined in the reallocation request can be achieved with current GWA investigators plus the part-time contribution of two additional participants that this reallocation would support.

Kristen Gorman

As a Principal Investigator for the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program, I have been involved in discussions of the proposed changes and I approve of this budget reallocation request. The proposed reallocation of funds will support important data collection and science synthesis efforts that will provide GWA improved continuity from the previous 5-year funding period and allow GWA to better meet our overall objectives.

Robb Kaler

As a Principal Investigator for the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program, I have been involved in discussions of the proposed changes and I approve of this budget reallocation request. The proposed reallocation of funds will support important data collection and science synthesis efforts that will provide GWA improved continuity from the previous 5-year funding period and allow GWA to better meet our overall objectives.

Sonia Batten

As a Principal Investigator involved in the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program from the very beginning, I would like to support this budget reallocation request. The proposed reallocation of funds will support important data collection and science synthesis efforts at a crucial time, and will provide GWA improved continuity from the previous 5-year funding period. This will allow GWA to better meet the overall objectives.

David Irons

As a past Principal Investigator for the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program and the Principal Investigator on many other EVOSTC projects in the past 35 years, I am familiar with the proposed changes, and I approve of this budget reallocation request and urge the Trustees to accept it. The proposed changes would support important data collection and critical science synthesis efforts that will provide GWA improved continuity and allow GWA to better meet our overall objectives.

Stanley Rice

To: EVOS Trustee Council 9 January 2024

From: Stanley "jeep" Rice;

member of the Science Review Panel for both Gulf Watch and Herring Programs

As a former long term EVOS researcher, and now a long term member of the Science Review Panels of both the Gulf Watch and former herring program, I urge acceptance of the proposed changes of by the Gulf Watch management team, based on the two points that follow.

Two points:

1. EVOS has a strong and important legacy of published peer reviewed research, from the beginning to the present.

EVOS research documented the acute effects during the response phase, then transitioned to documenting the long term effects to several species such as Killer Whales, pink salmon, sea otters, harlequin ducks, as wells as the lengthy recovery time for persistent lingering oil and the species affected. This literature base has stood the test of time, and has influenced policy, regulation, legal cases and future damage assessment studies of spills, such as the Gulf of Mexico spill in 2010. The third transition of EVOS studies focused more of ecosystem, important to resource managers who need to a greater understanding of perturbation effects on populations, to predict population trends rather that rely heavily on the tracking of trends. No other ecosystem in the world has been studied as intensely, over a long period of time, through warm and cold years, good and bad years, as the spill area of the Exxon Valdez. The knowledge gained, and the impact of the long-term research of the Exxon Valdez spill will continue to be valued for several decades to come.

2. EVOS needs to finish with the biggest bang for the buck by harvesting as many finished products that will support peer reviewed publications including syntheses.

Although the program was cruising toward a termination, the ending came sooner than initially planned. The management team has proposed some minor but significant adjustments within the funding ceiling, based on their intimate knowledge of the projects and, most importantly, knowledge of the integration and interdependency of the projects. These adjustments of how the funds are distributed will allow a smoother and more productive finish collectively. Most important, it will produce more products that will end up in peer reviewed literature. The legacy of EVOS peer reviewed literature will be extended.

I strongly support the changes proposed by the management team...

Dr. Stanley "jeep" Rice,

NOAA EVOS Researcher, Retired;

And, EVOS Science Review Panel for Gulf Watch and Herring Programs

In support of budget reallocation request by Gulf Watch Alaska: extending killer whale monitoring

As a Principal Investigator for the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program, I have been involved in discussions of the proposed changes and I approve of this budget reallocation request. The proposed reallocation of funds will support important data collection and science synthesis efforts that will provide GWA improved continuity from the previous five-year funding period and allow GWA to better meet our overall objectives.

My specific involvement involves leading the *Long-Term Killer Whale Monitoring Project* in the Pelagic Component, building on the work of my co-PI, Craig Matkin, who has led this project since its inception in 1984. This project has provided one of the few time series of pre-spill data, and has documented the spill to have clear, long-term, and continuing effects on killer whales that were exposed. The AB pod of southern Alaska Resident (fish-eating) killer whales has not recovered to pre-spill numbers, neither has the AT1 Transient (mammal eating) population that is headed for extinction. AB pod was on 30+ year recovery trajectory since the spill, but, along with other Resident pods, has declined following the recent marine heatwave in the Gulf of Alaska. This demonstrates the need to continue monitoring to assess recovery potential, and to understand the influence of environmental drivers.

This budget re-allocation will provide funding to continue to monitor the population dynamics of the injured AB pod and AT1 transient population that have not yet recovered from the effects of the oil spill. In addition, it will enable us to monitor the dynamics of other sympatric killer whale groups, specifically other Resident pods and the Gulf of Alaska transient population, to assess if the recovery of the injured groups is also being driven by the same environmental changes. Notably, the reallocation will extend our killer whale data through the current five-year funding period (through 2026), to provide matching time series with other GWA projects to allow synthesis efforts to also include a current data on these top predators.

Although primarily focused on funding our core population monitoring using non-invasive photo-identification, the field efforts supported by this budget reallocation will also allow us to conduct a broader suite of investigations to better integrate with the ecosystem-level synthesis. Specially, we will continue to use non-invasive drone photogrammetry to track short-term changes in whale body condition and growth, continue to use genetic techniques to elucidate killer whale diet from free-floating fecal samples, and continue to use acoustic moorings to infer year-round distribution using passive acoustic recording of killer whale calls. Together, these data on nutritional health, diet and distribution will allow us to better understand the longer-term population changes we are tracking, and to link changes in the status of killer whales to changes in the physical environment and impacts on the lower trophic levels in the food web on which these apex predators depend. These new elements have been emphasized in our research in recent years, in response to constructive recommendations from the EVOSTC Science Panel on how our valuable project could be diversified to facilitate a broader ecosystem understanding. These new elements have been successfully implemented alongside our long-term population monitoring and our now established and valuable components of this long-term study (see five-year report 2017-2021; annual report 2022).

Dan Cushing

I have participated in multiple EVOSTC-sponsored research projects during the past 15 years. I have reviewed and support this proposed budget re-allocation request. If approved, this re-allocation of funds would support data collection needs that are important for program objectives due to close integration with other projects. It would also provide support for Pelagic Component synthesis products and publications. This re-allocation would allow the GWA LTRM program to better meet its overall scientific objectives and program deliverables without requiring additional funds.

Anne Schaefer

I am writing to encourage the Trustee Council to support the reallocation of funds as proposed by the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-Term Research and Monitoring Program Management Team. As a Co-Principal Investigator on the Integrated Predator-Prey Survey project, the reallocation of funds will support the collection of important data that will facilitate analyses of predator-prey relationships in Prince William Sound. The fund reallocation will improve the continuity of the GWA-LTRM program from the previous 5-year funding period and allow GWA-LTRM to better meet overall objectives for the current funding period. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and for your consideration.

Lisa Ballance

In support of budget reallocation request by Gulf Watch Alaska: extending killer whale monitoring

I approve of this budget reallocation request. The data collection and synthesis efforts that this funding will support will allow continuation of research to monitor the population dynamics of killer whales known pre-spill, impacted by the spill, and studied post-spill. As apex predators, killer whales are also important indicators of ecosystem health. These types of data time series are rare, and valuable.

Laurie Millane

Please support continuation of funding for the killer whale project for the important work that The Northd Gulf Oceanic Society does.

John Coffey

I recently became aware that the North Gulf Oceanic Society NGOS could lose their funding from Exxon that they have relied on since the oil spill. I am a boat captain for Major Marine Tours, and Dan Olson, Craig Matkin, and all the researchers with NGOS here in Seward help us out SO much on the water. They are always helping us find the whales, providing information, sharing hydrophone recording, identification of individuals, etc. the list is endless. Providing up-to-date information on Orca pods, behaviors, diet, morphology, etc. through seminars, brochures, emails, and direct contact through VHF are only a few of the many ways we have all stood to benefit from their work. Just this past July we were on a 6hr trip and Dan Olson gave me a call on the VHF to let me know the AD16 killer whales were in Agnes Cove. When we arrived, Dan drove the Research vessel Notoa next to the 360 and discussed with all our 148 passengers, the work they were doing. Standing on the bow of his ship, speaking directly to all our passengers, he discussed how NGOS was working with a researcher who was flying drones above the whales and taking images of them from above. These would then be used to discuss body size as an indication of health among the various populations and pods of whales. I believe these daily interactions with NGOS have paramount importance to our community, our business, and the whales. The killer whale research and our relationship with NGOS is such an important part of our Seward family, and they could use our help! Thank you for your time and consideration.

Joshua Beiningen

I would like to see continued funding of all parts of this project. The interconnected nature of this research has demonstrated the need for it.

Matthew Miller

The North Gulf Oceanic Society plays a crucial role in preserving and understanding our marine ecosystems. Their ongoing efforts contribute to scientific research, environmental conservation, and marine education. To ensure the well-being of our oceans and the diverse life they support, it's essential that funding continues for the North Gulf Oceanic Society. Let's invest in the future health of our planet.

Rika Pere

I spent a major time of my life working closely with Dan Olsen, and NGOS while living in Seward, AK. The information provided and ongoing research has allowed all mariners to respect the Killer Whale population and take interest in the conservation efforts of these animals. To stop funding this research, I believe, would have a detrimental impact on this population. Insuring the conservation of our marine ecosystems, it is very important that the funding for North Gulf Oceanic Society's Gulf Watch long term research and monitoring program continues to stay funded.

James Lyons

Killer whales are crucial to the ecosystem that is Alaska tourism. As a tour operator in the Kenai Fjords, my livelihood depends on the health of this species. Without funding Killer whale research in the Kenai Fjords I believe the health of these populations will decline thus will create a tourism decline.

Joshua Jackson

I have been working out of Resurrection bay for over 20 years with tourists. During this time I have developed relationships with the researchers at North Gulf Oceanic Society. They have played a crucial role in providing thousands of guests information on Orca whales in the area. This is a huge win for conservation of Orca whales. All of the tour vessels and their passengers benefit directly from their research. One of the companies I work for took out over 98,000 passengers in 2023. This is just one of many tour companies in Seward. NGOS research is a megaphone to a huge platform of individuals traveling in our area and it would be an overwhelming disservice to our Orca populations to cut any funding this project needs.

Thank you for your time,
Captain Joshua Jackson
Seward Coastal Charters

tim johnson

To whom it may concern,

Thanks you for the opportunity to submit a public comment on EVOS funding. I'd like to submit a comment in support of the NGOS candidacy for the current funding cycle. My wife and I have personally volunteered for many years crewing on the NGOS vessel to conduct the important research they conduct. We feel the importance of this research is paramount to our understanding of the longterm effects of the 89' Exxon Valdez spill. This project has a longterm track record of conducting the highest quality research and it deserves continued support. We have personally put our time and effort toward it's goals because we believe in it's value. Please continue to financially support this project.

Thank you,

Tim Johnson

Seward, AK

Tamara Lang

To the Public Advisory Committee of the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill Trustee Council:

My name is Tamara Lang, and I am a tour operator with Major Marine Tours out of Seward, Alaska.

I have been familiar with the work of the North Gulf Oceanic Society for the last nine years, and I can say with certainty that they are the leading source of scientific research and public information regarding the status of killer whale populations in and around areas affected by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill.

The North Gulf Oceanic Society has conducted studies on killer whales in and around PWS reaching back to before the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill, allowing for the longest continuous study of these apex predators and the ways in which they are still affected by the crude oil that was spilled on Bligh Reef in 1989.

The AT1 Transient pod, also known as the Chugach transients, were recorded swimming directly through the oil slick surrounding the Exxon Valdez, and since then their population has shrunk to only 7 individuals whom exposure to hydrocarbons has rendered incapable of successful reproduction. This is pivotal as this is a genetically distinct group of transient killer whales found only in Prince William Sound and the Kenai Fjords. The unfortunate legacy of the Exxon Valdez oil spill thus continues to this day in the form of these few remaining killer whales, whose disappearance from the region continues to be documented by NGOS. Every year it is NGOS who updates tour operators when all seven individuals have been found still alive, and it NGOS who is there to document when other populations of killer whales appear in areas where only AT1s had been seen before. As the ramifications of the Exxon Valdez oil spill continue to play out in the transient killer whale population, it is only NGOS who has the decades of research to allow them to see the big picture of how the Exxon Valdez oil spill has influenced these apex predators, a view which has vital ecological implications for the region.

In addition to their work with the AT1 Transient population, the North Gulf Oceanic Society is the most vital source of scientific outreach for tour operators in the region. By maintaining and updating the photo ID catalog of resident and transient killer whales in the region, North Gulf Oceanic Society keeps the tour fleet on the cutting edge of information about our killer whale populations, which in turn allows us to inform our passengers to the highest standard of interpretive integrity. Every year, the North Gulf Oceanic Society hosts an evening lecture with a synopsis of their research, and each year that event is standing-room only even in the largest venues Seward has to offer. They are also regularly active on VHF channels in our area, answering the many questions operators put forward about our killer whale populations, and providing to-the-minute information about the animals. Such is the relevance and necessity of the scientific outreach that NGOS provides to our community.

Without NGOS, what we know of killer whales in our region would stop overnight. The photo ID catalogs that NGOS maintains would freeze in their current state, regardless of new births or deaths or divides within our local pods, leaving these animals subject to speculation instead of rigorous

science. The studies on fecal samples and DNA prey analysis that yearly contributes to both the scientific community and our collective knowledge would cease. Without NGOS, the apex predators most affected by the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill would lose both their commitment of scientific rigor and their strongest advocate.

Please consider funding the North Gulf Oceanic Society. They are essential to our community, our scientific knowledge, and to our killer whales.

Leslie Jacoby

I am writing to support the Gulf Watch Alaska LTRM's budget reallocation request specifically for the Long-Term Killer Whale Monitoring Project (led by Matkin and Durban). New results indicate the importance of this project running the full length of the Gulf Watch Alaska program and allowing it to be included in the final synthesis of the effect of recent heatwaves on the recovery potential of EVOS injured resources.

I hope that you will consider funding this project during the upcoming reallocation process.

Thank you!

Richard Jacoby

To Whom it may concern, I am writing in support of budget reallocation request by Gulf Watch Alaska: extending killer whale monitoring.

The proposed reallocation of funds will support important data collection and science synthesis efforts that will provide GWA improved continuity from the previous five-year funding period and allow GWA to better meet our overall objectives.

NGOS observations reach back to 1984, and represent one of a very few datasets offering a continuous timeline before, during and after the EVOS event. It has documented the spill to have clear, long-term, and continuing effects on killer whales that were exposed.

The AB pod of southern Alaska Resident killer whales has not recovered to pre-spill numbers, nor has the AT1 Transient population that is headed for extinction. AB pod was on 30 year recovery trajectory since the spill, but, along with other Resident pods, has declined following the recent marine heatwave in the Gulf of Alaska. This demonstrates the need to continue monitoring to assess recovery potential, and to understand the influence of environmental drivers on the entire ecosystem.

Thank you for your consideration.

Richard Jacoby
Seward Alaska

John Ford

I strongly support the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program's request for this budget reallocation. As a scientist involved for many decades in the research and conservation of killer whales, I believe that the Long-Term Killer Whale Monitoring Project is critical to future conservation and management of killer whales in the northern Gulf of Alaska. It is especially important that assessment continues to monitor the recovery of killer whale groups affected by the Exxon Valdez oil spill in the face of ecosystem changes brought about by recent marine heat waves.

Carrie Vos

I believe there needs to be continued funding for further killer whale research. To gain more research and knowledge for future similar circumstances and to repair the existing killer whale issues that are still continuing to this day from the oil spill.

Eric Knudtson

As a resident of Homer, Alaska, and a concerned citizen, I've followed the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program. I believe that the proposed reallocation of funds will support important data collection and science synthesis efforts that will provide GWA LTRM improved continuity from the previous 5-year funding period and allow GWA better to meet their overall objectives for this current funding period. The objectives outlined in the reallocation request can be achieved with current GWA investigators, plus the part-time contribution of two additional participants that this reallocation would support.

Please support this reallocation of funds.

Debbie Hollomon

I support the continuation of funding for the North Gulf Oceanic Society. Research efforts to collect data on impact and resilience are essential in better understanding and protecting our marine ecosystems and the incredible species we share them with.

Kristen Lindsay

I am a kayak guide and outdoor educator and have spent the last 2 summers guiding out of Seward. In my experience, the killer whale monitoring project provides some of the most extensive, interesting and useful information that we can provide to guests. Killer whale research provides insight into the whole Ecosystem of the fjords, not just killer whales, and should certainly receive funding from the current reallocation. The information gathered helps us not only understand better what is happening as global climate change continues, it helps draw people who might not otherwise engage into a conversation about the environment.

Michelle Keagle

I am writing in support of EVOS continuing to fund the North Gulf Oceanic Society in order to continue their Long-Term Killer Whale monitoring project. This project is important for the health and longevity of the North Gulf Killer Whale population which is increasingly threatened by the changes to the atmosphere and ocean due to climate change. I have personally volunteered on several of their monitoring trips and feel it is vital research that needs to be continued. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Andrew Smith

The North Gulf Oceanic Society has been an integral source of current information on killer whales in south central Alaska for me personally and professionally. As a marine naturalist based out of Seward, I educate and introduce 800 visitors to Resurrection Bay and the Kenai Fjords National Park. Dan Olsen with the North Gulf Oceanic Society provides my company and our community with multiple panels each year providing updated research data and studies about the local populations of killer whales. These animals, which we often encounter on trips, are a highlight to visitors from around the world and I am able provide a reliable interpretative presentation to them because of Dan Olsen's knowledge share each year.

Please include them in the future funding reallocation.

Tony Perelli

I would like to express my support of the budget reallocation request by GWA to extend the killer whale monitoring efforts.

Thank you for considering.

Tony Perelli

Rebecca King

I'd like to express my support for the Gulf Watch Alaska budget reallocation request for the Long-Term Killer Whale Monitoring Project. It gives us vital information about the health of Alaska's oceans and animals, upon which every Alaskan depends.

I hope that you will consider the potential long term importance of funding this project during the upcoming reallocation process.

Thank you,
Rebecca King

Dr. Deborah Boege Tobin

As a concerned Alaskan citizen and professor of biological sciences at the University of Alaska Anchorage for almost 18 years, I have closely followed the Gulf Watch Alaska Long-term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program, and fully support the proposed reallocation of funds for the GWA program and the North Gulf Oceanic Society. This funding will support important data collection and science synthesis efforts that will provide GWA LTRM improved continuity from the previous 5-year funding period and allow GWA to better meet their overall objectives for this current funding period. The objectives outlined in the reallocation request can be achieved with current GWA investigators plus the part-time contribution of two additional participants that this reallocation would support. I implore you to support this reallocation of funds. Please do not let such important long-term monitoring in this critical habitat cease.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Dr. Deborah Boege Tobin

Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored)

From: W Scott Pegau <wspegau@pwssc.org>
Sent: Thursday, January 11, 2024 7:33 AM
To: Wang, Shiway W (EVOSTC sponsored)
Cc: Maglaqui, Joy P (EVOSTC sponsored); rob.suryan@noaa.gov
Subject: Statement for the PAC and Trustees

CAUTION: This email originated from outside the State of Alaska mail system. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hi Shiway,

I would like to provide the following statement for the PAC and Trustee Council meetings.

As the herring component lead of the Gulf-Watch Alaska Long-Term Research and Monitoring (GWA) program I wish to voice my support for the requested budget reallocation. The allocation for the aerial forage fish surveys fills a gap in the forage fish program that occurred when the original project was not funded. The reallocation does not bring back the project as it was originally proposed. It only contracts the spotter and aircraft for the surveys. I am committed to ensuring the equipment will be ready for the surveys and the data is quality controlled and submitted in a timely manner.

Having the surveys still allows us to monitor changes in forage fish populations in areas that cannot be accessed by a boat. The data from this survey is proving to be valuable in understanding changes in herring populations throughout the Gulf of Alaska. We predicted the large 2012, 2016, and 2020 herring year classes that have been seen in Sitka. The fact that the 2012 year class did not appear in Prince William Sound is important in understanding the survival of herring in Prince William Sound. The surveys also provide information about changes in sand lance populations and will provide an indication if capelin populations rebound.

Approving the rebudget request allows the program to fill gaps in our understanding of the recovery of forage fish. It supplements the work by the herring component and forage fish project and compliments the other research being conducted in the GWA program.

Thanks for your consideration of the rebudget request.

Scott Pegau

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