Coastal/Local Class Research Vessel Cruise Preparation and Risk Mitigation in the age of COVID-19

Committee Report
UNOLS Council Meeting July 2020
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Background

• R/V PELICAN operational pause as Per NSF recommendations March 13 until June 1
  – Cancellations- 33 days at sea- 365K
  – Postponements-36 days at sea- 388K
  – Since COVID operational, cancellations and postponements are due to Scientists travel restrictions.

• Similar Fates: BLUE HERON, RACHEL CARSON, F.G. WALTON SMITH, ROBERT GORDON SPROUL, SAVANNAH
COVID-19 Preparations

- Vessel Operations Prepared COVID 19 Plans, Policies, Checklist, SOPs
  - Vessel Outbreak Prevention Management Plan 1.3
  - LUMCON COVID 19 Screening and Quarantining Doc 1.4
    - Testing Regime, Logistics, Quarantine
  - LUMCON Chief Scientist Consideration Document
  - LUMCON Marine Superintendent Consideration Document
  - Pre-Cruise Planning-Cruise Risk Assessment- Cruise Logistical Considerations
  - LUMCON Cruise Moves Forward Checklist
  - LUMCON Final GAR Risk Assessment Decision
  - Standard Operating Procedures: Clientele, Crew, Procedures at Sea, Galley, Linens, Sanitation, Small boat use, PPE, Response to Persons Suspected COVID While at Sea
- Crew were COVID-19 tested, then completed State of Louisiana Bloodborne Pathogens Training and Airborne Pathogens Training.
- Conducted a COVID-19 Safety Orientation and signed acknowledgment of Policies, Protocols and Procedures Concerning COVID-19
- Set up a handwashing station prior to boarding vessel.
- Added signage throughout vessel, sinks, entry ways, heads and safety board.
- Crew voluntary Temperature checks beginning in April.
- Scheduled cruises with time between cruises so vessel can be sanitized.
PELICAN supported two LOW RISK, time sensitive mooring operation cruises since returning to operations June 1\textsuperscript{st}.

a) bare minimum scientist with low risk profiles, logistics and each had own stateroom (separation)
   - WHG, 3 day cruise, 5 scientists
   - Proteus Technologies, 4 day, 2 scientists

b) operations within 48 hours from nearest port.

c) COVID screening, no charge state funded screening/insurance no co-pay
   - WHG Tested prior to returning to work, May 18\textsuperscript{th} (14 days out) and May 28\textsuperscript{th} (4 days out)
   - PT Tested June 8\textsuperscript{th} and June 16\textsuperscript{th}.

d) USCG Certified Medical Person in Charge aboard, voluntary temperature checks 14 days out and during cruise for Crew and Scientist.
Lessons Learned

• Testing Centers- State/County Centers and Local Urgent Care Facility.
  – Can be unreliable, run out of test/restrictions of testing asymptomatic persons
  – Results 2-3 days or as long as 5-7 days.
  – Delays in testing results - Holidays, uptick in testing, delivery
  – One lost test

• Recommending testing of additional personnel as relief/subs.

• Is it all worth it? Definitely!!
  – Kept one COVID positive researcher off vessel
    • Ramifications of positive person.