

Arctic Icebreaker Coordinating Committee Report March 2009

USCGC HEALY has just started her 2009 science season and is in transit to Kodiak, AK where she will commence her first science mission. HEALY conducted a shakedown cruise from Jan. 28 – Feb. 8, 2009 during which multiple science instruments were tested and the science mapserver program was used to assist in a search and rescue mission (based on input from the science system, it was determined that the distress call was false). HEALY will support two NSF funded Bering Ecosystem Study/Bering Sea Integrated Research Program cruises this year in the Bering Sea (22 days, Cooper; 40 days, Ashjian) during March – May. She then will return to Seattle until leaving again in early July to transit north to Barrow, AK where she will conduct a cruise in support of NOPP moorings and hydrography on the Beaufort Shelf supported by the ONR (13 days, Pickart) and a cruise to conduct Extended Continental Shelf Mapping, operating together with the CCGS LOUIS ST. LAURENT, supported by NOAA (41 days, Mayer). HEALY will return to Seattle in late September and will enter drydock shortly thereafter for maintenance and upgrades, including the installation of a new Multibeam system. She will not be able to support the 2010 BEST/BSIERP field season. The NSF is seeking an alternative icebreaker for that work.

USCGC POLAR SEA was on standby to support the ODEN during this year's Deep-Freeze cruise to break out McMurdo Station, Antarctica but her services were not required. POLAR SEA is departing Seattle in late-summer for two research cruises in the Beaufort Sea, one, supported by NRL, DOE, USGS from early-mid September – mid-late September on the Beaufort Shelf primarily to conduct methane hydrate mapping with other science also supported (12-16 days, Coffin) and a second supported by the NSF from late-September through the end of October to conduct polar bear surveys in the Beaufort Sea (34 days, Harlow and Ben-David). USCGC POLAR STAR remains in caretaker status at the USCG Base in Seattle. The NSF budget no longer includes funds for the maintenance of the POLAR STAR.

Efforts to foster communication between the icebreaker science community and the local Alaskan communities adjacent to the science study areas continue. The AICC Chair, together with the HEALY Chief Scientists, provided a synopsis of HEALY cruises to the AEWCC chair and executive director. The AICC Chair/HEALY Chief Scientist will attend the July AEWCC meeting to present the science findings of the BEST/BSIERP HEALY cruises to the commissioner. Dr. Phil McGillivray has coordinated presentation of the POLAR SEA planned research to the AEWCC and attended the recent AEWCC meeting in Anchorage. The AEWCC remains very supportive of science, despite ongoing concerns that increased shipping activity (scientific, industrial, etc.) may disrupt subsistence hunting activities.

The AICC Chair participated in a Town Hall meeting focusing on Arctic Research that was held at the Dec. 2008 AGU meeting in San Francisco, CA meeting and that was sponsored by the US Arctic Research Commission and the University of Alaska Fairbanks. Information on conducting research from the three USCG icebreakers and on opportunities with other CG operations in Arctic regions was presented. The workshop was well attended. The AICC Chair and UNOLS Executive Secretary also attended the US Arctic Research Commission's meeting

on Dec. 16 and a meeting of the Commission with Pacific Area Commandant Vice Admiral Pekoske at the CG Base in Alameda, CA.

The AICC also has been working with the US Department of State to identify a means to communicate advance information to local Alaskan communities regarding upcoming cruises by foreign research vessels/icebreakers in the US Arctic. The Department of State (DOS) and NSF agreed that the NSF OPP would serve as the point of contact for such information and facilitate the communication of advance information to local Alaskan communities regarding upcoming foreign cruises in the area. The AICC, DOS, and NSF are evaluating the effectiveness of this approach.

The AICC completed debriefs of the 2008 HEALY cruises in November and is presently considering if any recommendations are appropriate.

The AICC met in Seattle WA on December 2-3, 2008 and will next meet in Arlington VA on June 24-25, 2009. Draft minutes of the December 2008 meeting are on the UNOLS web site.

The AICC can be reached by writing to the Chair (carin@whoi.edu) or to the UNOLS Office (office@unols.org).

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