



Comings and Goings

The field season is upon us, and the Aleutians are suddenly abuzz with projects. Here is a summary of a few of the groups pausing in Adak on their way west this spring, just like Aleutian cackling geese...



Attu Island Remediation (late April through early June)

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and their Contractor, Bristol Environmental Services, will be conducting a cleanup of spilled petroleum and site investigations on Attu Island. Crews will stage in Adak and fly a chartered aircraft between Adak and Attu as the weather allows; the aircraft will remain on Attu for the duration of the project. The initial camp crew will arrive in Adak on 28 April and travel to Attu aboard the landing craft, *Sam Taalak*, while others in the work crew will be in and out of Adak throughout the month of May and into early June. Besides the USACE and their contractors, representatives from the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, the US Army, and media will also be onsite, and a USFWS representative will likely be present for the duration of the cleanup project.



The start of the Attu project may be delayed due to snow coverage; this satellite image from mid-April shows drifts almost up the roof of the old USCG warehouse. Crews will evaluate the conditions upon arrival and do what they can to prepare the camp and clear the runway.

Marine Sampling (May and June)

The Department of Energy (DOE) will have staff, along with the University of Alaska Fairbanks and the Aleutian Pribilof Island Association, passing through Adak. They will be conducting radionuclide sampling of the marine environment (fish, kelp, sea water, etc.) around Amchitka and Adak via the R/V *Qualifier 105*. Note the sampling around Adak is strictly for reference and there is no concern over an impact to Adak resources from radionuclides. This is part of the DOE's five-year plan for monitoring radionuclides related to the underground nuclear detonations that occurred on Amchitka in the 1970s.



Did you know Greenpeace was formed in 1971, when activists set sail for Amchitka to protest the nuclear tests? Their boat was intercepted by the USCG, and the tests proceeded.

Amchitka Island (12-23 June)

The DOE will also be conducting surveys of the Amchitka drilling mud pit caps and road system, while the Alaska Volcano Observatory conducts maintenance on their geophysical monitoring equipment located on the island. Transportation will be provided by R/V *Tiglax*, and Alaska Maritime NWR staff will be present for the duration of the project. (Another Amchitka project will occur in August, when the US Navy will be conduct contaminant investigations and sampling of multiple contaminated sites across the island. Transportation will be provided by R/V *Tiglax* and Alaska Maritime NWR staff will present for the duration of the project.)

R/V Tiglax (first port call in Adak: 29 May)

Alaska Maritime NWR's research vessel will depart Homer on 17 May and head west, deploying field camps in the Semidis and eastern Aleutians on the way to Adak, where they'll pick up a dozen people bound for Buldir, Attu, and Kiska. The Refuge's new Aleutian Islands Unit Biologist, Nora Rojek, will fly to Adak on 26 May and be in town for a few days before boarding the ship. We hope to have an informal gathering at the bunkhouse during her stay--be sure to come and welcome her to her new realm! She is replacing Jeff Williams, but don't worry--you'll still see him around; he has transmogrified from his biologist role into an Assistant Manager position, and plans to spend time on Adak in June.

M/V Pukuk: Tours for Birders and WWII Buffs (May and June)

Captain Billy Choate will be around again this year with his trusty little ship. First he'll take birders to Attu (15-29 May) and on pelagic tours around Adak (through 2 June). On 5 June he'll depart Adak with Valor Tours to visit various islands of importance during WWII.

Nearshore Ecology (June)

Researchers will continue work on sea otter/kelp forest ecosystem dynamics in the Aleutians with a multi-year project supported by the National Science Foundation. The UNOLS vessel R/V *Oceanus* will begin its cruise in Adak this June and head east. Personnel will use the opportunity to replicate otter surveys around Adak before the NSF cruise.

Kagalaska Caribou

The USFWS is halting work on two invasive species projects on Alaska Maritime NWR due to restrictive language in the federal budget act which funds refuge activities. One of these projects is the control of invasive caribou on Kagalaska Island. The federal budget act, which provides fiscal year 2016 funding for the USFWS, includes language prohibiting the Service from spending any funds to remove non-native caribou from Kagalaska Island. The specific language in the Senate Appropriations Committee Report is: "The Committee directs that no funds are provided for the Service to conduct a caribou hunt on Kagalaska Island in the State of Alaska." For more information please contact Refuge Manager Steve Delehanty at (907) 235-6546.



The old Jeff (left) and the new Jeff (right). He began working for the Refuge as a field tech on Agattu Island in 1990, spent many years as the Aleutian Islands Unit Biologist, and is now an Assistant Refuge Manager.



New Aleutian Islands Unit Biologist Nora Rojek (above). Nora's first job with the Refuge was doing Navy Legacy work on Adak in 1995. She spent several summers working seasonally in various field camps before taking a permanent job with USFWS in Fairbanks. She rejoined the Refuge in 2010 as the Alaska Peninsula Unit Biologist, and has now come full circle, returning to the Aleutians, where her Alaskan career began.