



Project Profile

Training Scientists for Community Outreach

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Seattle, WA

Issue: The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Alaska Fisheries Science Center in Seattle, WA wanted to improve their staff outreach activities to schools and the community. Scientists were interested in improving their presentations to schools in light of increased emphasis on classroom educational standards. Developing alternative outreach tools to use with community groups was another priority.

Many employees are involved in outreach by personal choice as an additional task with limited time for training. Isolated work environments and heavy seasonal workloads were other challenges faced in developing training and support for outreach efforts.

Solution: After consultation with an internal outreach team, an on-line needs assessment determined employee interests, needs and priorities for supporting their outreach efforts. Three events were organized to address the following key questions identified in the needs assessment.

What is NOAA currently doing for outreach? An employee in-reach fair was organized to showcase materials, displays and programs that were used by fellow employees. A conference room was setup similar to a community fair might be – with NOAA employees as the audience! Knowing what already exists reduces the “reinventing the wheel” factor.

What is it like to teach science in today's schools? Three teachers representing different grade levels participated in a



facilitated panel discussion with an opportunity for audience interaction. Hearing about classroom experiences directly from teachers gives a new perspective about science education.

What are the science education standards for students in Washington schools and how are they measured? In a workshop format, NOAA employees were introduced to the state's science education standards, completed several questions on the standardized science test and scored those questions. This hands-on method helps employees to understand what is expected of teachers and students in today's schools!

Role: Cascade Interpretive Consulting (CIC) guided NOAA employees to develop their own process for improving the outreach training of scientists. CIC developed and administered the needs assessment, organized the teacher panel and the science education standards training.

