



From the Office of the Director, Jeff Regnart
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Commercial Fisheries

2011 Director's Achievement Awards for OUTSTANDING SERVICE

The Director's Achievement Award for Meritorious Service is the highest award given by the division to an employee who has shown excellence in his or her work during the preceding year or years. The Director's Achievement Award for Outstanding Service is given to employees whose performance is clearly superior to that of others in similar positions or to employees who have made significant contributions to the division over the last year. Candidates for an award are nominated by staff through their respective Regional Supervisors or Section Chiefs. I am pleased to announce that the following individuals have been selected to receive the Director's Achievement Awards for 2011.



Roger Dunbar
MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD
Fishery Biologist II • Region III
Fairbanks



Russell Sandstrom
Captain (Boat Officer IV) *R/V Medeia* • Region I
Juneau



Mark Willette
Fishery Biologist III • Region II
Soldotna



Nick Sagalkin
Area Shellfish/Groundfish Management Biologist • Region IV
Kodiak



Gene Conservation Laboratory Staff • Headquarters
Anchorage



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2011 Director's Achievement Awards for MERITORIOUS SERVICE

Roger Dunbar
Fishery Biologist II • Region III • Fairbanks

In 1981, Roger Dunbar began his career with ADF&G in Bristol Bay as a Technician at the Egegik River tower. He spent the next 10 summers in Bristol Bay, while also putting in time at the Hidden Falls Hatchery in Southeast Alaska and on Kodiak during the Exxon Valdez oil spill. In 1991, he moved to Cordova and spent the next 10 years as the crew leader at the Miles Lake sonar project on the Copper River. In 2002, he became project leader for the Anvik River and Sheenjek River sonar projects on the Yukon River. He helped in the transition from Bendix to split-beam sonar at both of these projects and subsequently, to DIDSON.

In 2004, Roger took a lead role in developing a new sonar project near Eagle, Alaska to monitor Yukon River king and fall chum salmon crossing the U.S./Canada border. Roger was able to draw upon his years of experience to make this project successful; it has developed into a cooperative project in collaboration with the Department of



Fisheries and Oceans, Canada. Through Roger's hands-on leadership and expertise, this project has become the metric for assessing Canadian king and fall chum salmon populations within the Yukon River drainage and has proved to be a valuable tool for managing transboundary salmon stocks of international importance.

Roger has an affable personality and instills in his technicians a sense of pride in working for the department. He also works hard at maintaining good relations in the communities where his projects are based. The excitement he shows in minor details (especially the technical ones) can be infectious and as most who have worked with him can attest, he is a pleasure to work with.

Roger has been an exceptional department employee for more than 30 seasons, and it is with pride, the division recognizes him with the Director's Achievement Award for Meritorious Service for 2011.



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Russell Sandstrom

Captain (Boat Officer IV) *R/V Medeia* • Region I • Juneau

Russell Sandstrom is being recognized for his dedicated service to ADF&G and numerous contributions to the division's Southeast Vessels Program through the Director's Achievement Award for Outstanding Service for 2011.

Russell first became part of the Southeast Vessels Program when he came to ADF&G in 1996, after previous state service with the Department of Transportation. He was hired as a Boat Officer I assigned to the *R/V Medeia*, and was quickly promoted to a Boat Officer II. This was the right spot for Russell as he was able to combine his multiple seaworthy talents, bridging together previous fishing and maritime experiences with his education in oceanography. He has an innate skill to take a complex set of tasks and design, and support fluid and seamless survey plans and corresponding vessel operations.

Russell was promoted to the Boat Officer III position aboard the *R/V Medeia* in 2001 and served as engineer and chief mate to Captain Wade Loofbourrow. Together with second mate Bob Frampton, these three were instrumental in managing the various vessel operations and functions aboard the *R/V Medeia*. This was a foundational time for the Southeast Region during development of several new and innovative fisheries: the shellfish fisheries, groundfish fisheries, the herring spawn-on-kelp pound fisheries, and the pot shrimp fishery. Serving aboard the *R/V Medeia*, Russell participated in innovative research as the shellfish and groundfish programs solidified important stock assessment surveys throughout Southeast Alaska. Russell also participated in assisting the Division of Wildlife with important sea lion research. Russell provided valuable assistance to the Southeast Vessels Program as a number of vessels transitioned around the region. In this role, Russell spent time on many vessels, including the *R/V Sundance*, *R/V Kestrel*, and *R/V Kittiwake*. Each of these vessels served to provide an excellent platform for vital research and management of various fisheries throughout the region and Russell played key roles in each of those efforts.



In the spring of 2006, Russell was promoted to Captain of the *R/V Medeia* and during his tenure has overseen the vessel's near-perfect safety record. He is admired by the crew and science staff alike, and is highly sought out for his skills in tackling complex vessel operations. He assisted project staff gain greater efficiency from survey set and haul schedules and has instituted well-organized and proficient deck operations. In the Boat Officer IV position, Russell has also taken a lead on many important vessel coordination efforts including streamlining the shipyard contracting process, making tremendous improvements on a statewide level to ship documents that are submitted to a shipyard when the vessel goes in for maintenance. Russell has also developed strong contacts outside the department, and his efforts were instrumental in bringing about collaboration with NOAA for the department's vessel shop building located in downtown Juneau.

On a more personal note, Russell is known for developing a strong family setting aboard the *R/V Medeia*. He is a first-rate story teller, often sharing interesting stories from many of the amazing world travels and life adventures he has experienced. He is a tremendous musician and on many occasions during surveys, has delighted boat crew and science staff alike with evening entertainment. He is also a keen master of limericks, often keeping the staff up late at night pondering another line or encouraging some fun for our lab staff that may not be aboard the *R/V Medeia*, but will be further testing or examining samples taken at sea. Under Russell's cheerful and humorous direction, these limericks are carefully stowed in sampling jars to be later enjoyed by those in the lab.

The department's boat officer crew provides a strong foundation on which the department relies for sound research and management. Russell's previous experience and that gained throughout the course of his tenure with the division has served the department and State of Alaska very well.



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Mark Willette
Fishery Biologist III • Region II • Soldotna

Mark Willette, Upper Cook Inlet Area Research Biologist, currently works for ADF&G in Soldotna; however, he has also previously worked in Kodiak and Cordova.

Mark is widely recognized for his understanding and application of fisheries science, as demonstrated through the eclectic array of research he has been involved with. A perusal of fisheries literature for Alaska will turn up Mr. Willette's name often. For example, after the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill (EVOS), he was the principal investigator on numerous studies examining the effects of oil on salmon and herring populations. He authored or coauthored at least 37 different reports summarizing his various EVOS studies. Mr. Willette's research promoted an increased understanding of how fishery populations that had come into contact with oiled waters were affected. He was able to show that juvenile salmon exposed to oil from EVOS suffered reduced growth rates, which resulted in increased predation; i.e., smaller fish are more vulnerable to predators for a longer time than their faster growing counterparts.

Mr. Willette has also been the lead investigator and author on numerous research studies assessing Pacific salmon populations and their productivity in Cook Inlet. The Cook Inlet salmon fishery is famous for its hotly-contested battles concerning allocation of salmon resources to various users. Recent published economic studies have pointed out how valuable the salmon fishery is not only to the Kenai Peninsula, but to the entire state of Alaska. Because Mr. Willette is one of the state's most knowledgeable scientists of freshwater ecosystems, his research is often relied upon when critical decisions are made regarding Cook Inlet salmon resources. Mr. Willette's studies have included development of a bioenergetics model describing juvenile sockeye salmon growth and survival. His background in oceanography has prepared him well



for the marine studies he has initiated, including use of sonar to assess adult salmon distribution in Cook Inlet in relation to water temperature, salinity, tide stage, and water clarity. Mr. Willette is currently leading a very complex project that has received intense political, public, and department scrutiny. Under his leadership, this project intends to describe and quantify biases associated with capture of salmon via fish wheels. And finally, Mark Willette served

for a time period as the department's scientific salmon "expert", serving on a multi-agency committee tasked with developing policies regarding Cook Inlet's beluga whale population.

Mr. Willette has attended and provided presentations to various entities in the scientific community throughout Alaska, the Lower 48, Canada, and the world. He is widely published in department literature, as well as in scientific journals. Those who have worked with or for Mr. Willette soon came to realize the depth of his understanding of concepts that include bioenergetics, biometrics, ecology, limnology, oceanography, and population dynamics. When asked to explain complex biological or statistical principals to his peers, however, Mr. Willette is very capable of articulating these complexities in a clear and understandable way.

ADF&G's mission statement declares that the agency will protect, maintain, and improve the fish, game, and aquatic plant resources of the state. Mr. Willette's resume could be summed up with that very statement. His career with the department has been instrumental in helping this agency achieve and maintain its worldwide reputation as a leader of sustainable fisheries through sound scientific research and management. For these contributions, Mark Willette is being recognized through the Director's Achievement Award for Outstanding Service for 2011.



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Nick Sagalkin

Area Shellfish/Groundfish Management Biologist • Region IV • Kodiak

Area Shellfish/Groundfish Management Biologist Nick Sagalkin is in a demanding position. Shellfish/groundfish is a year-round, diverse fishery. Nick's three management areas (Kodiak, Chignik, and Alaska Peninsula) support Tanner, Dungeness, red and golden king crabs; weathervane scallops; sea urchin; shrimp; octopus; sea cucumber; Pacific cod; and black and dark rockfish and lingcod fisheries—and those are just the state-managed fisheries! In addition, he is ultimately responsible for coordination of all parallel groundfish fisheries, those that occur in state waters with federal rules, such as walleye pollock and skates. Because of the variety of shellfish and groundfish species, he has the pleasure to visit the Board of Fisheries each year—and sometimes multiple times a year.

Commercial fishing provides for a substantial portion of the economies of the three fishery management areas he oversees. The industry benefits from well-managed resources and is informed of management decisions. Nick's management style, cooperation with industry, and personal dedication are vital to the department's success.

Nick is recognized for developing solutions to fisheries management issues. His supervisory direction resulted in rapidly-improved fishery GIS analysis of logbook data for fisheries where stock assessment data are not available.

Nick has gained the respect of other shellfish/groundfish management staff throughout the state, and his advice is often sought. Nick has formed, under his own initiative, an interregional shellfish/groundfish working group. This group meets on issues of common interest to shellfish/groundfish managers. Also, per the commissioner's request, Nick promotes interaction with Division of Sport Fish when establishing commercial harvest levels for species also taken in sport fisheries.

Nick's knowledge of fishery resources, and his dedication and work ethic, result in a highly successful management program. He also takes his supervisory responsibilities seriously and provides clear direction and oversight. Nick actively pursues development opportunities for his staff. Under Nick's guidance, one of his employees is pursuing a graduate degree to develop a population model for Kodiak shrimp.



Nick is dedicated and flexible in accommodating and coordinating demands placed on him. He has a responsive attitude and has developed a reputation that tasks assigned will be completed accurately and with confidence. He is recognized for his effort in taking the time to explain to the public the department's management actions and the justification for those decisions. His demeanor benefits the public and the department. Not only is his style recognized, but also his availability and dedication requires a good deal of personal commitment.

Nick represents the State of Alaska on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's Groundfish Plan Team. The Plan Team's

primary function is to provide the council with the best available scientific information, including scientifically-based recommendations regarding appropriate measures for conservation and management of the Gulf of Alaska groundfish fisheries. The Plan Team compiles an annual report to summarize the most recent biological condition of groundfish stocks and the social and economic condition of the fishing and processing industries. There are several other interjurisdictional areas that Nick must stay current on, such as federal Gulf of Alaska groundfish observer regulations, and the three-mile territorial sea boundary, which for many of the transboundary species he manages, is very important to the fishing public.

During 2011, Nick's workload was very demanding as he was ultimately responsible for three Board of Fisheries meetings, three Tanner crab fisheries, and six state waters Pacific cod fisheries—all during a span of January through April! All of these fisheries were fast-paced, high volume, and required substantial work.

Throughout 2011, Nick worked on fishery coordination issues of the state waters and federal Pacific cod seasons. His understanding of this multifaceted interjurisdictional issue was very good and he was able to present clear presentations and received compliments regarding clarity from the public, his peers, and the Alaska Board of Fisheries.

For Nick's career contributions and outstanding performance during the past year, he is being recognized through the Director's Achievement Award for Outstanding Service for 2011.



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Gene Conservation Laboratory Staff Headquarters • Anchorage

Over the last two decades, ADF&G's Gene Conservation Laboratory (GCL), consisting of more than 20 laboratory and scientific staff, has been on the forefront of providing critical genetic stock identification (GSI) information for sustained management of Alaska's salmon fisheries, where improved genetic resolution of salmon stocks remains a crucial component of modern salmon management. GCL research and application has provided critical stock composition information for management of most major salmon fisheries including Yukon River Chinook and chum salmon, Bristol Bay sockeye salmon, Cook Inlet sockeye salmon, Copper River Chinook salmon, and Southeast Alaska sockeye salmon, to name only a few. Some of these



Andy Barclay, Judy Berger, Wei Cheng, Christina Cupp, Tyler Dann, Nick DeCovich, Lisa Fox, Sara Gilk-Baumer, Stew Grant, Zachary Grauvogel, Chris Habicht, Tara Harrington, Heather Hoyt, Jim Jasper, Paul Kuriscak, Eric Lardizabal, Heather Liller, Kathryn Mohrmann, Eric Newland, April Rochford, Serena Rogers, Ty Spaulding, Bill Templin, Bruce Whelan, Brian Collyard, Cloe Dunlap, Drew Hamilton, Tracy Hansen, Shane Hertzog, Chase Jalbert, Chase Korsmo, Colton Liptka, Casey McConnell, Melanie O'Rourke, Jim O'Rourke, Jordan Palmer, Zac Pechacek, Jed Konsor, and Sarah Turner

efforts, such as the Port Moller test fishery, seek to deliver inseason information to fisheries managers, with samples analyzed and data delivered within days. It is fair to say that the work of GCL staff has assisted salmon management in nearly every part of our state, with managers increasingly dependent on the data they provide.

Most recently, staff of the GCL have provided the fundamental leadership and technical skills necessary to complete the Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Project. This project is an unprecedented comprehensive program designed to sample commercial and subsistence chum and sockeye fisheries over a four-year period from Chignik Bay to Kotzebue Sound, which includes over 3000 km of shoreline. Guided by a stakeholder-driven process, some 320,000 chum and sockeye salmon samples have

been collected between 2006 and 2009, and the GCL is in the process of analyzing more than 150,000 samples to estimate stock composition of fishery harvests to the greatest resolution possible as a means to address longstanding issues. This is very likely the largest application of mixed stock GSI ever attempted in the fisheries arena. This high-profile project comes with significant time pressure, with lab staff and leadership working many extra hours to deliver this product to the Board of Fisheries on schedule in 2012.

Along with delivering essential data for fisheries management, the GCL is continually advancing the science of fishery genetics through development of additional DNA markers, expansion of baseline collections, application of innovative statistical methods, and use of genetic methods to investigate stock structure in other commercially important species. The GCL is recognized internationally for its leadership in technique development and application of genetic methods to modern salmon management. Over the past five years, staff have authored or contributed to over 70 publications on salmon and other species, many in the peer-reviewed literature. They have also provided numerous presentations to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Their consistently high level of dedication to the division's mission is exemplary, and for these contributions, they are being recognized through the Director's Achievement Award for Outstanding Service for 2011.