

Explore

The Alaskan Coastal Ecology program is the core of our education programs, having been offered for over 35 years! This longevity is one of the aspects of working as the education coordinator for Coastal Studies that is so special to me. The connection to place, and the experiences students have at the Peterson Bay Field Station grabs hold of teachers, students, parents, and staff, and makes them want to learn more, and experience more, of the natural world around them.

Brendy Wedberg, a 5th grade teacher from Big Lake, first came to the Peterson Bay Field Station in 2003. She had a wonderful experience with her students, and kept trying to find a way to get her students back to Kachemak Bay, to experience our tides, tidepool creatures, and hands-on learning. 15 years later, she was able to bring 60 students on the long drive south, as she wanted to continue having students experience the changes our ecosystem goes through on a daily basis. Many of her students were experiencing being able to explore the intertidal zone in a safe environment for the first time, and the joy that the students were sharing with their classmates was evident!

Another teacher, Krista Arthur from Redoubt Elementary, has been bringing her 6th grade students to Peterson Bay for over 10 years straight. After my 3rd year in a row working with her students, she continued to express how much she enjoys the program, and looks forward to it every year. She says that it allows students that may not be the highest achievers in the classroom setting to blossom before her eyes, and make connections to what they read and discuss about in class.

While many of our teachers and schools have been visiting Peterson Bay and Kasitsna Bay Lab for many years, we were lucky enough to have Sandra Barron from the Moose Pass School bring the entire elementary school on an Alaskan Coastal Ecology program for the first time. Sandra expressed that she had heard about the programs and opportunities students had during visits to Peterson Bay Field Station, and wanted to make the connection between her students and the ocean, even only a short distance from home. She shared afterwards that her students loved the cultural heritage programs, and of course, being able to pick up a sea star, and smelling its armpit to detect a rotten garlic odor!

This connection, and desire to have students see the interactions that occur between animals in the forests and waters around Kachemak Bay, really comes out when talking with students after they have been at Peterson Bay Field Station. I have heard students exclaim, "I never knew I would like ocean creatures so much!", or, "I didn't know I would enjoy being outside so much, I have to explore more with my family."

As the year progresses, I always look forward to the hectic, exciting season that is our spring and fall Alaskan Coastal Ecology programs. Experiencing students touching the ocean for the first time, or tasting the sweetness of a high-bush blueberry, is one of the best parts of my job. Hearing the stories shared between classmates, teachers, and parents, continues to inspire me to work with students and families, helping connecting them with Kachemak Bay, and hopefully their own special places where they live.

-Seth Spencer

Education Program Coordinator