

COASTAL SERVICES

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LINKING PEOPLE, INFORMATION, AND TECHNOLOGY

BEACH GROOMING: Raking Through the Issues in California

**New Flooding Observation
and Prediction System
May Help Save Lives**

**Collaboratively Managing
Marine Resources in
American Samoa**



Using a Blog to Expand Education Programming's Reach in New York

The experience of Great Lakes teachers participating in an intensive shipboard education program is reaching a broader audience through the use of technology. A Web-based "blog" lets computer users tap into what the 16 instructors learned during the weeklong voyage.

"We wanted to take this information out to stakeholders, as well," says Helen Domske, education specialist for New York Sea Grant.

"It's really had a multiplier effect," adds Paul Focazio, New York Sea Grant Web content manager.

A blog is a webpage that is typically created by individuals to provide commentary or describe personal events. Blog entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order and can include graphics, video, and links to other websites. The term "blog" is a contraction of the term "Web log."

The Shipboard and Shoreline Science program blog was more than just an on-line travel diary, says Domske, who led the excursion's educational programming. "This incorporated true science."

From July 13 to 19, educators lived and learned aboard the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's 180-foot research vessel *Peter L. Wise Lake Guardian*, studying Lake Ontario alongside the ship's researchers.

"It's really had a multiplier effect."

*Paul Focazio,
New York Sea Grant*

During the program, which was sponsored by the Centers for Ocean Sciences Education Excellence (COSEE) Great Lakes, educators collected and analyzed data, learned about the interactions of water, weather, and aquatic life, and studied the parallels between Lake Ontario and the world's oceans. Domske worked with the teachers to develop journals and teaching tools to bring back to their classrooms.

Focazio created the blog by shadowing the educators and writing entries about the information they were learning and their reactions. "I was constantly in production mode," he says.

"We really wanted to make people realize that science was going on, and to teach them about the science itself," Domske notes. "We wanted to avoid the pitfall of trying to make it too personal or too cutesy."

"We deal with such a wide range of audiences," Focazio adds, "that the blog needed to be user-friendly and interesting and informative."

He says the blog has been accessed by "everyday people,



teachers, students, the media, legislators, and people in NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) and other organizations."

E-mails received during the voyage and almost 10,000 visitors to the blog between July and October indicate to Focazio and Domske that they met their goal of expanding the impact of the onboard program.

Since the blog was hosted on COSEE's website, the only expense was "the time to create it," she says.

"I think a blog could be an addendum to most educational experiences," Domske says. "I don't think it is just limited to teacher or educational programs. This would be a great way to show people what's going on with a restoration project, for instance."

Focazio adds, "We're definitely implementing blogging technology to cover other events and experiences in the future." ❖

To view the Shipboard and Shoreline Science program blog, point your browser to <http://coseegreatlakes.net/weblog/category/lake-ontario-exploration-workshop/>. For more information, you may contact Helen Domske at (716) 645-3610, ext. 3, or hmd4@cornell.edu, or Paul Focazio at (315) 312-3042, or Paul.Focazio@stonybrook.edu.

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Alternative Approach

Besides participating in the meetings of the beach managers group, the California Coastal Commission has formed a beach grooming work group.

The work group is looking at "several beach grooming alternatives that are being discussed, promoted, and in several cases implemented by cities through permit conditions," Engel says. Cities and counties are also being encouraged to voluntarily change their local coastal plans to address beach grooming.

Alternatives being promoted, she says, include no grooming, hand grooming, seasonal grooming, zonal or rotational grooming, and threshold grooming, or wrack removal beyond a certain density or height.

Changing Views

To educate the public and beach managers about these alternative practices and their benefits, the California Coastal Commission and the Beach Ecology Coalition plan to create a statewide natural beach ecosystem awareness campaign and to develop a statewide best beach management practices guide.

"We understand that the tourist draw is really important, but we feel that with education we can perhaps change the public's viewpoint on what is a desirable beach," Engel says.

Simmons also encourages other beach and coastal managers to start a dialogue with those performing beach grooming in their state.

"It's very important," Simmons says. "The best way to address issues is to first get them out on the table and talk about them." ❖

For more information on beach grooming in California, contact Karen Martin at (310) 506-4808, or Karen.Martin@pepperdine.edu, Jenny Dugan at (805)893-2675, or j_dugan@lifesci.ucsb.edu, or Jonna D. Engel at (805) 585-1821, or jengel@coastal.ca.gov. For more information on beach grooming in San Diego, contact Dennis Simmons at (858) 581-9975, or DJSimmons@sandiego.gov.

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