Position Announcement: Director of Coastal Resilience

The Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC) in Cordova, Alaska, seeks an innovative, collaborative principal investigator to launch the organization's program focused on coastal resilience.

About the Prince William Sound Science Center

The Prince William Sound Science Center (PWSSC) is an Alaska-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit. Incorporated in 1989 in the wake of the Exxon Valdez oil spill, our mission is to advance community resilience and the understanding and sustainable use of ecosystems.

For over 36 years, PWSSC has been dedicated to providing tangible benefits to coastal communities through scientific research, ecosystem monitoring, applied science, inquiry-based STEAM education, and meaningful demonstration projects. PWSSC has boots on the ground, boats in the water, and students in the field year-round. Our work fosters community engagement, stewardship of natural resources, and lasting connections between people, science, and the environment while generating solutions to the challenges faced by marine and coastal communities and ecosystems.

Based in the remote and important commercial fishing community of Cordova, Alaska, our town is only accessible by boat or plane and is situated in the home of the world's richest waters.

Context & Opportunity

PWSSC's new coastal resilience program, led by the Director of Coastal Resilience (DCR), will guide the development and application of approaches that support a more resilient future for coastal communities. This opportunity comes at a pivotal time: coastal communities and industries are facing new challenges as the oceans they rely upon undergo change, and forward-looking solutions are needed to secure long-term stability and prosperity.

By advancing applied research, demonstration projects, and technology improvements—such as advanced fisheries management tools, maritime infrastructure modernization, renewable energy initiatives, full utilization of fisheries products, and development of value-added seafood—we can strengthen local economies while helping communities adapt. Additional opportunities include fishing fleet efficiency, fisheries processing improvements, cooperative research with industry, local foods programs, regenerative tourism, and support for emerging industries such as mariculture.

This work will be carried out with both ecosystem and economic benefits in mind, in partnership with internal staff and external collaborators. Public and private sectors alike are seeking practical strategies that support jobs, innovation, and community well-being, and our region—the northern Gulf of Alaska—offers one of the best opportunities to deliver solutions with relevance across Alaskan coastal communities and beyond.

Position Vision & Mission

Vision: Establish a new, world-class, applied science program in the home of the world's richest waters.

Mission: Empower coastal communities to thrive through approaches that can be developed, tested, and used here and applied elsewhere.

Position Details

The Director of Coastal Resilience (DCR) will have a director-level research scientist designation. At PWSSC, each scientist leads an externally funded program of research and may oversee several team members, with opportunities to pursue research, educational outreach, and initiatives that align with our mission.

The DCR will develop an applied science program in one or more fields of expertise, increasing PWSSC's mission impact and collaborating with partners across sectors. Through their work—and the work of others they may supervise or collaborate with—they will advance applied projects that empower coastal communities to thrive.

Examples of areas of interest include (but are not confined to):

- Work with industry to bring new products, technology-driven solutions, or management approaches to fruition;
- Build a comprehensive research program and identify strategic investments informed by the best available resilience science (social, environmental, economic);
- Conduct investigations into renewable energy implementation options and how they may impact and benefit rural coastal community resilience;

- Lead research on ecosystem management models that can be utilized at the state or federal level;
- Provide insights into recent patterns of the North Pacific Ocean;
- Help develop and advance regional economic development strategies, such as regenerative tourism;
- Collaborate with scientists and fishermen on adaptation planning and implementation;
- Establish a community engineering & entrepreneurship test bed, operating as an innovation workshop environment, startup accelerator, and prototype development hub;
- Advance fisheries innovations in processing, management, or product development, such as by establishing a fisheries innovation focus area within the coastal resilience program.

The successful candidate will have a demonstrated history of collaboration with state/federal regulatory agencies, Tribes, industry, academia, and nonprofits, as well as a record of success in generating extramural funding from private, foundation, governmental, or other sources.

Applicants should have a strong working knowledge of coastal and ocean issues, stakeholders in Alaska, experience working on relevant projects or research in Alaska or elsewhere, the ability to become proficient in new topics, and excellent written and verbal communication skills.

Qualifications

Required:

- Advanced degree (master's, PhD, or terminal degree) in a relevant discipline, or equivalent professional experience.
- Demonstrated leadership experience in managing complex programs, research, or community initiatives.
- Proven ability to secure funding from private, philanthropic, and government sources, with a track record of successful grant writing and fundraising.
- Strong communication and collaboration skills, with experience working across sectors (e.g., community, industry, government, and academia).
- Commitment to supporting the resilience, prosperity, and well-being of coastal communities.

Preferred:

- PhD or equivalent terminal degree in a related field.
- Experience directing interdisciplinary teams or partnerships.
- Familiarity with the northern Gulf of Alaska region, its communities, and its economic and ecological systems.
- Expertise in one or more of the following disciplinary backgrounds:
    - Marine Biology & Ecology
    - Oceanography (physical, chemical, biological)
    - Carbon & Nutrient Cycling

- Coastal Geology & Geomorphology
- Fisheries Science & Management
- Coastal & Marine Engineering
- Climate Science & Adaptation Planning
- Renewable Energy (tidal, wave, offshore wind, coastal applications)
- GIS & Remote Sensing
- Data Science & Modeling
- Environmental Science & Policy
- Economic Development
- Industrial Process Improvement
- Seafood Product Development
- Economics (resource management, natural capital evaluation)
- Sociology / Anthropology
- Public Health (environmental and food security)
- Community Planning & Policy
- Community Development

Who You Are

You are a collaborative leader who thrives on bringing people together to solve complex challenges. You value both scientific rigor and community wisdom, and you know how to translate technical knowledge into practical solutions. You are entrepreneurial in spirit—creative, proactive, and resourceful in building partnerships and securing support. You are culturally responsive, with deep respect for Indigenous knowledge and the traditions of coastal communities.

You are a strong communicator, equally comfortable engaging with local residents, industry stakeholders, government officials, and academic researchers. You think strategically, balancing long-term vision with near-term results that make a difference. You adapt well to changing conditions, navigate uncertainty with resilience, and stay focused on solutions. Above all, you are passionate about advancing the prosperity, health, and sustainability of coastal communities and the ecosystems that support them.

Team & Work Environment

PWSSC is dedicated to advancing scientific knowledge about the ecosystems of the North Pacific and the resilience of Alaska's coastal communities. Our research spans fisheries, climate change, ecosystem monitoring, avian ecology, mariculture, genetics, transcriptomics, ecotoxicology, oceanography, adaptation, and more.

As a community benefit nonprofit, PWSSC operates as a soft money institution, meaning that the majority of its research funding is secured through competitive grants and external contracts.

Currently, the institution applies a 35% overhead rate to cover administrative and operational costs. To onboard this position, PWSSC will provide 100% salary + benefits support during the first year to help establish research activities. This support will taper off over the following two years to 67 % and 33%, respectively (possibly negotiable dependent on candidate's funding success), with the expectation that the successful candidate will secure external funding to cover their salary and research program costs beyond the initial three-year period.

Our collaborative environment fosters innovative research, and our team enjoys access to research vessels, analytical and wet lab facilities, a running filtered seawater system, and extensive long-term datasets from our regional monitoring programs. We are committed to supporting groundbreaking research while providing an inclusive, supportive atmosphere and work-life balance for all team members.

Why Join Us?

- Live in Cordova, a small, vibrant fishing community surrounded by the natural beauty of Prince William Sound and the Copper River Delta, with access to stunning outdoor activities year-round.
- Contribute to self-directed, meaningful, cutting-edge research in a region recognized for its ecological significance.
- Join a supportive and passionate team dedicated to helping coastal communities maintain socioeconomic resilience among healthy ecosystems.

Compensation & Benefits

Starting salary range: **$90,000–$110,000 DOE**. Job type: full time, exempt.

Salary level and startup funds are dependent on career level and may be negotiable. PWSSC is committed to supporting its principal investigators in building funded research portfolios that align with our mission.

Benefits include:

- Medical/dental/vision insurance
- 10 paid holidays
- Paid time off
- 403(b) retirement plan with employer match
- Flexible spending account including dependent care option

To Apply

Please submit the following to **president[at]pwssc.org** with the subject: *Director of Coastal Resilience: [Your First and Last Name]*:

- A cover letter describing your qualifications and what you propose to accomplish in the first two years of the position (not to exceed three pages)
- Resume or CV
- Three professional references who may be contacted regarding this position

Review of applications will begin on 10/13/25 and the position is open until filled. The preferred start date is as soon as possible and can be negotiated.

For more information, contact the hiring committee at **president[at]pwssc.org**.

The Prince William Sound Science Center is an equal opportunity employer and will consider all qualified applicants without regard to protected characteristics such as race, color, religion, national origin, marital status, changes in marital status, political affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, status with regard to public assistance, physical or mental disability, pregnancy, parenthood, sex, age, or other legally protected status.

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