



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
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8 May 2013

Dr. Edward J. Buskey, Interim Chair
Dr. G. Joan Holt, Interim Director
Marine Science Institute
University of Texas
750 Channel View Drive
Port Aransas, TX 78373

Dear Drs. Buskey and Holt:

Your colleague Dr. Ken Dunton has been an invaluable research, outreach and environmental education partner with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for several years. I've had the personal pleasure and honor of working with him to facilitate his efforts in the marine ecosystems of the Arctic Refuge and in the Inupiat village of Kaktovik. It is therefore my distinct pleasure to tell you that Ken has been selected to receive the 2012 Alaska Regional Director's Excellence Award for Outstanding Partner. I've copied the award nomination below. Please feel free to contact me for further information about this award or the work we are doing in northeastern Alaska.

Sincerely,

David Payer, Ph.D.
Supervisory Ecologist, Arctic NWR

Dr. Ken Dunton
Marine Science Institute, University of Texas
2012 Alaska Regional Director's Award nomination in the category Outstanding Partner

Dr. Ken Dunton is an exceptional scientific, environmental education, and outreach partner with the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Dr. Dunton is a Professor at the Marine Science Institute, University of Texas. Beginning in 1980s, Dr. Dunton conducted groundbreaking research into the ecology of the nearshore marine environment within Arctic Refuge. Since 2003, Dr. Dunton has worked closely with refuge managers and biologists to design a scientifically rigorous program of marine inventory, monitoring and research that is highly responsive to refuge management needs. Dr. Dunton's work on the ecology of benthic invertebrates, marine food webs, and nutrient cycling had generated several recent peer-reviewed papers. This is just the beginning, however, as his work is consistently management-focused, and has been used by USFWS to identify important areas for Service trust resources including species of fish and birds having subsistence value and/or of conservation concern. This has facilitated refuge participation in oil-spill planning efforts, such as identification of highest priority areas for protection in the event of a spill and siting of spill preparedness equipment with minimum environmental impact. Dr. Dunton's work has also been instrumental in analysis of current and projected future climate-change impacts on Arctic coastal ecosystems. Dr. Dunton has served on committees of PhD candidates conducting avian research on the Arctic Refuge, in one case helping to expand their focus to include distribution of food resources for shorebird species of concern and thereby facilitating identification of important bird habitats on the refuge. Dr. Dunton's work was instrumental in justifying the inclusion of the Arctic Refuge in the National Marine Protected Areas Network, based on exceptional biological values.

Dr. Dunton's commitment to Arctic Refuge extends far beyond his scientific efforts. He is passionate about environmental education, and since 2008 has conducted highly successful Marine Science Camps in Kaktovik. Through these week-long camps, he has reached out to the majority of the children in the village. The camps are highly interactive, providing students with fun experiential lessons in the marine sciences, and encouraging them to go on to mentor their peers and present their results to village adults at annual "graduation" celebrations. Some of his students have presented results to the greater North Slope community in Barrow, and even provided radio interviews on what they've learned about Arctic marine ecology. The camps, which are run as partnerships with the Arctic Refuge, Friends of Alaska Refuges, Harold Kaveolook School in Kaktovik, the public school system in Texas, and the University of Texas, are highly regarded by young and old alike in Kaktovik, and have done much to elevate the stature of the Service in that community. Dr. Dunton has also arranged for several activities throughout the year, engaging students in Kaktovik to share information and experiences with students on the Gulf Coast of Texas, and hiring promising Kaktovik students as citizen scientists to collect water samples from coastal lagoons year round under the supervision of village elders.

Dr. Dunton has earned this special recognition for his extraordinary efforts on behalf of the vulnerable and threatened marine ecosystems of the Arctic Refuge, and for his passion and commitment for passing on knowledge and respect for Arctic marine ecosystems to the youth of Kaktovik.