EMBRACING THE POTENTIAL FOR CITIZEN SCIENCE IN MARINE TOURISM

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BACKGROUND

Research in citizen science has shown that citizen science projects not only contribute to publishable, peer-reviewed science but also promote scientific literacy and awareness in participants while fostering a better understanding of and trust in the scientific process. Utilizing this participatory approach to science communication among researchers, tour operators and visitors in the growing marine-tourism industry presents unique opportunities to further ecological understanding as well as influence decision-making.

OUTCOMES & APPLICATIONS

Understanding scientists’ perceptions will inform the development of survey instruments to be administered to tourists participating in a marine-based citizen science project that specifically address these perceptions. This will support my dissertation research objective to identify how citizen science projects can facilitate the exchange of knowledge among marine scientists and visitors to promote mutual learning and a shared sense of its importance.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Scientist engagement is a critical component of bridging communication gaps between scientists and non-scientists. This pilot study (as the first phase of my dissertation research) aims to evaluate the perceptions of marine scientists toward marine tourism and citizen science, as well as the extent to which these perceptions may act as barriers to or supports for the incorporation of citizen science in marine tourism.

METHODS

Marine scientists at Hatfield Marine Science Center associated with the Marine Mammal Institute and Oregon Sea Grant, in addition to marine scientists in Southeast Alaska affiliated with Sea Grant will be interviewed during Summer and Fall of 2019 about their perceptions of citizen science, marine tourism, and the potential for the two to be integrated.

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