

# Backyard Buoys Project Improves Ocean Data Access for Indigenous Communities



A new ocean science effort to improve equity and inclusion is underway, thanks to a US\$4.98 million cooperative agreement with three regional associations of the NOAA-led U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System. The National Science Foundation (NSF) provided the funds through a cooperative agreement for

Backyard Buoys, a project to improve ocean data access for Indigenous communities.

[Backyard Buoys](#) empowers Indigenous and other coastal communities in the Pacific Northwest, Alaska and the Pacific Islands to collect, steward and use wave data captured by strategically placed buoys to complement their existing knowledge. The effort will support their blue economy, which includes maritime activities, food security and coastal hazard protection.

## Closing the Coastal and Ocean Data Gap

The initiative brings together a geographically and culturally diverse group of partners that include three regional associations of the NOAA-led U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (NANOOS in the Pacific Northwest, AOOS in Alaska, and PacIOOS in the Pacific Islands); Indigenous and education partners from each region; and the wave buoy and sensor company Sofar Ocean. Together, they are working to close the gap in access to coastal and ocean data, especially for Indigenous communities in remote coastal areas.

The initiative is one of six Phase II projects aligned to the Track E: Networked Blue Economy. It is funded through the [NSF Convergence Accelerator](#), a programme created to find solutions to large-scale societal challenges related to climate, sustainability, food, energy, pollution and the economy through research, innovation and partnerships.

□ Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission staff hold Sofar buoys at a co-production workshop. (Courtesy: James Kendall/Bureau of Ocean Energy Management)

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