



Interview with 2022 Sea Grant Knauss Fellow Caitlin Feehery January 2023

What brought you to the Knauss Fellowship?

Before the Knauss Fellowship, I studied environmental law at Vermont Law School. Prior to that, I was an informal educator at an environmental nonprofit for many years, and I also spent time at Scripps Institution of Oceanography studying deep-sea mussels phylogenetic relationships.

What are you doing as a Knauss Fellow?

In my fellowship, I am working at NOAA's National Ocean Service as a policy analyst in the Policy and Constituent Affairs Division. In this position, I assist the National Ocean Service leadership in developing and implementing programs that address complex coastal challenges, and I support our engagements with Congress, the White House, other federal and state agencies, and constituents.

What have you gained through this experience?

In short, this position has provided me a broad perspective of how NOAA programs fit into wider ocean and coastal policy discussions and activities throughout the whole government.

What project from this year are you most proud of?

While I have worked on many different things during my time as a Knauss Fellow, I am most proud of my contributions to the Ocean Climate Action Plan, which is a whole-of-government plan that sees the ocean as a powerful tool in the fight against climate change. This plan summarizes and assesses current and planned federal ocean-related mitigation and adaptation activities, characterizes the benefits of these actions, and identifies new and additional actions the government could take to provide more effective climate change solutions.

What have you enjoyed most?

The work I've actually enjoyed the most has been on offshore wind issues. I admit, I never considered offshore wind something that I'd be interested in prior to this fellowship, but I have work with a great team and have been able to take the lead on many projects.

What are your post-Knauss plans?

After this fellowship, I'm staying with NOAA in the National Ocean Service, which I'm very excited about. I had originally envisioned that I would go back into the legal field, as I had just graduated law school, but as it turns out, the policy arena is where I truly thrive. I am so excited to be able to help support NOAA's mission and goals for the foreseeable future.

What is something you know now that you wish you had known before your fellowship?

I think the one thing that I wish I knew before I started is to really make sure that you jump on every opportunity possible because the time really does fly. I can't believe the year is almost over for me.

Do you have any advice for the application process?

Applicants should make sure they have a good understanding of why they want to do this fellowship. There are a lot of very qualified individuals and really understanding why this is the right fit will help your application be noticeable. Also, take advantage of the optional review of application materials by Lake Champlain Sea Grant prior to the director interview and possible nomination for national review.

What professional development opportunities would recommend to incoming fellows?

I have taken classes, attended conferences, and done a whole lot of networking. I would recommend future fellows try and do any and all opportunities that are put on by your fellow fellows. Through my colleagues, I have been exposed to the inner workings of many different government agencies, the White House, and Congress. It has been fantastic to get a more complete look at the breadth of opportunities this fellowship provides.

Is there anything else you want to share about your experience?

The Knauss Fellowship is a wonderful opportunity and has really shaped my future plans. I'm very grateful for NOAA, the National Sea Grant Program, and Lake Champlain Sea Grant for affording me this opportunity. I wish all future Knauss Fellows the best as they embark on this wonderful journey.