



HLY0802: March 29-May 6, 2008

Chief Scientist's Log



Healy at the dock in Dutch Harbor.

March 29: Leaving Dutch Harbor

Post and Photos by Carin Ashjian

It is almost 11 PM on March 29, local Alaskan time. Seven hours ago a massive tug pulled the USCGC Healy away from the dock in Dutch Harbor, setting us free of land for the next 38 days. The tops of the mountains of Dutch were shrouded in clouds as we steamed through the harbor and out into the Bering Sea. Healy rolls gently as we steam northwest towards our first station.

We've just set sail on HLY0802, the second cruise of the BEST-BSIERP program.

BEST-BSIERP (Bering Ecosystem Study-Bering Sea Integrated Research Program)

is a collaborative project funded through a partnership between the National Science

Foundation and the North Pacific Research Board to understand the impacts of climate

change on all aspects of the Bering Sea Ecosystem, including the people who depend on it. As part of that effort, 46 scientists on Healy are heading north to study the plants and animals in the bottom part of the food chain.

We have spent the last two days in a frenzy of activity on board Healy, finding and unpacking our crates, setting up equipment, and...importantly as we head to sea....tying down our equipment so a wayward toss of the ship will not dislodge it from our counters. The last 2 hours were particularly impressive in the level of activity as we all scurried around securing crates.

We arrive at our first station tomorrow morning. For our first activity, we will deploy floating sediment traps, a series of upward facing tubes (with bottoms) that hang in the water column and collect the rain of material that sinks through the water column. There are sets of traps set at different depths in the water to measure the amounts of materials sinking at each depth. This is important to understand how much carbon is sinking to the sea floor where it is food for the animals that live in and on the seafloor.

We are very brave; the traps are very small and we will set them loose to drift for 24+ hours as we continue on our way to sample at our station located ~12 miles away. The traps are equipped with transmitters to relay their position to a satellite and then to us and with radar reflectors and strobes. We have high hopes that we can find them again when we return to their location in 24 hours!

I am exhausted. My room is on the 04 deck; four levels up off of the main deck. The science labs are located on the main deck. My legs are very weary. But I am excited; the adventure has finally begun!



The North Pacific Research Board and the National Science foundation are partners in a six-year, \$50 million study of the Bering Sea marine ecosystem and the effects of climate change on this vital area. Learn more about the BEST-BSIERP Bering Sea research program at <http://bsierp.nprb.org>

