



HLY0802: March 29-May 6, 2008

Chief Scientist's Log

April 4: Springtime in the Bering Sea

Post by Carin Ashjian

The wind is blowing from the north now, bringing a cold blast of Arctic air down to the Bering Sea. The temperature this morning as I trotted out on the fantail at 0530 to conduct a VPR cast was a pleasant 15 deg. F. The decks were caked with frozen seawater in the regions where we had been working with nets and benthic grabs and cores. Warm head and face gear was a must. And I couldn't find my gloves.

The morning did not progress much better. The seawater incubators on the bow where we conduct our experiments had all frozen. There was no running seawater to keep water moving through the hoses and tanks and so all of the hoses and seawater manifolds were solid lumps. Not a good start.

The cold blast set in as we embarked on a process station late last night. The cold impacted all of our activities, from our net tows (a net full of ice is a sight to behold and very very heavy!), to the crane that is used to move the Multicore (crane was frozen), to the incubators, to the faces of the people who set out on the ice for their second ice station in two days. Despite all of the difficulties, we completed our station late this evening after the completion of an 8 hour ice station (lots of good data!), several net tows, a VPR cast, a number of CTD casts, and 7 Van Veen Grabs.

Although cold with a 30-knot wind, the day was incredibly beautiful with clear blue skies and sparkling snow on the ice floe. The day dawned during our first net tows at 9 AM, shedding pink light over the newly formed ice in the lead where we were working. The ice in this region is in large floes covered with deep, white snow and in smaller pancakes forming in the leads. Although beautiful, this combination proved deadly to the net tows since so much loose, small ice was floating in the water behind the ship.

Several of us spent the day defrosting the seawater system on the bow. The final solution was to wrap the seawater manifolds in heat tape, insulation, and then to "dress" them in a Mustang suit to provide extra insulation against the biting wind. Tonight will be very cold and time will tell if our solution will work.

It was a very busy day for all. As night falls, Healy moves west to the next station through the golden light of an Arctic evening. We have a busy evening ahead – science never sleeps!