

Alaska's Next NSF EPSCoR Project

Introduction. The Alaska Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) is formulating a proposal for a 5-year, \$20 million NSF award to support research and build capacity. We have converged on an overarching question and a pair of research themes, and seek your thoughts and ideas to refine this framework and to contribute to a robust research plan.

Overview. Since 2001, the NSF EPSCoR program has awarded four large Research Infrastructure Improvement (RII) grants to the University of Alaska to enhance research capacity in the state of Alaska. Information on the current EPSCoR award is available at <https://www.alaska.edu/epscor/>

UA is eligible to apply for a new RII award in summer 2016. The FY2016 solicitation will be released in late April, but we do not anticipate that it will differ markedly from the current solicitation, [NSF 15-566](#). To plan for this EPSCoR Phase 5 ("EP5"), a group of prominent researchers and administrators from the three main University of Alaska campuses met in July and settled on a preliminary framework to address pressing research questions while building Alaska's scientific capacity.

Overarching Question. The emerging overarching question for EP5 is, *How can we understand regime shifts and tipping points in large-scale ecosystems in Alaska?*

Thematic areas. The proposed question would be addressed via two themes. The first is *coastal margins and marine living resources*, which reflects the critical importance of the coasts to America's ecology, economy, and way of life, and the fact that Alaska contains nearly half of the nation's coastline. The second theme is *forests and wildfires*, an area of study that is especially relevant given that more than 5 million acres already scorched in Alaska this season.

Both of these themes fit well into the NSF's growing interest in research into the nexus of [Food, Energy and Water](#) (see also this [NSF Dear Colleague Letter](#)) and [Risk and Resilience](#).

How to get involved. EP5 will be led by Dr. Anupma Prakash. We have also identified points-of-contact (see below) at UAA, UAF and UAS to solicit broad input; feel free to contact them with thoughts and questions. Along with the local points-of-contact, Prakash will also be hosting open meetings on the UAA, UAF and UAS campuses to address EP5-related queries. The UAF meeting will be held September 23 from 10 AM-noon in Room 109 Butrovich. UAA and UAS meetings will be held October 2 and 6, respectively, with times and dates to be determined.

Please submit white papers of up to three pages that align with the identified thematic areas to your point of contact no later than October 31, and cc the document to Anupma Prakash. Please clearly articulate and state the *intellectual merit* of the research activities you propose, and include a section explaining *why it is critical for EPSCoR and Alaska to fund the proposed research efforts*. Researchers or teams with the most promising and well-aligned input will be invited to be a part of the EP5 writing team, which will compose the full NSF EPSCoR proposal beginning in November 2015.

Points of Contact

Principal Investigator

Anupma Prakash, aprakash@alaska.edu, (907) 474-1897

UAA

George Kamberov, gkamberov@uaa.alaska.edu, (907) 786-5472

UAF

Larry Hinzman, ldhinzman@alaska.edu, (907) 474-6000

UAS

Karen Schmitt, karen.schmitt@uas.alaska.edu, (907) 796-6518