

2023 Arctic Emerging Leaders Program AAR

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Trip Overview:

From 27 January to 02 February 2023, I participated in the Arctic Frontiers Conference's Emerging Leaders Program, representing the United States Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Academy's Center for Arctic Study and Policy (CASP). The purpose of this annual seven-day long program is to bring early career professionals in fields related to the high north together for professional development, mentorship, and partner building in the Norwegian Arctic. 30 participants from around the globe are selected each year and they must be ages 35 or younger.



Figure 1: 2023 Arctic Emerging Leaders and organizers pose while in Norway's Lofoton Islands

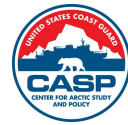
More information about the Arctic Emerging Leaders Program can be found here:

<https://www.arcticfrontiers.com/young/emerging-leaders/>

Background Information:

I was first introduced to this program through ALCGOFF 147/19 soliciting applicants in October 2019. The message announced the application process for a CASP scholarship for the 2020 Arctic Frontiers Emerging Leaders program. At the time, I was an O-3 assigned to a Coast Guard-sponsored advanced education program and my operational Arctic and Alaskan experience included two Arctic deployments as a Deck Watch Officer onboard USCGC *Polar Star* and USCGC *Healy*, multiple Bering Sea fisheries enforcement patrols onboard USCGC *Mellon*, and a tour as Commanding Officer of USCGC *Mustang* in Seward, Alaska. I was in my final semester of graduate school and pursuing an M.P.A. and an M.P.S in Homeland Security, both of which were heavily focused on governance in remote Alaska and security in the polar regions. After completing CASP's application process, I was selected as an alternate.

While I intended to reapply in following years, due to COVID-related restrictions, the 2021 and 2022 Arctic Frontiers Emerging Leaders programs were either cancelled or abbreviated and no potential attendees were solicited for Coast Guard-wide. After completing my graduate school payback tour as the Chief of Administration at the Coast Guard's Seventeenth District, a billet which further increased both my interest in pursuing a career related to the high north and my firsthand understanding of the logistical challenges of supporting Arctic operations, I was assigned as the Operations Officer onboard USCGC *Healy* in 2022. While there was not a Coast Guard solicitation released for the 2023 program, my Commanding Officer onboard *Healy* encouraged me to reapply through the Arctic Frontiers Conference's website and, after I was accepted, assisted me in securing funding from CASP. Mr. Tony Russell was my point of contact at CASP and very supportive of my attendance from the first communication that I had with him. He has also indicated that CASP intends to support future Coast Guard participation.



Since attending the program, I have found out that CASP began sponsoring participants for this program in 2018 and I was the fifth junior officer to be sponsored. Coast Guard alumni who I have been able to identify are LT Christian DiBari (2019), CDR Cynthia Travers (2020), and LT Sydney Mills (2022). In addition, Dr. Victoria Herrmann, the 2021-22 White House Fellow assigned to the Coast Guard, was a 2015 Arctic Emerging Leader.

Application Process:

I applied through the Arctic Emerging Leaders application process outlined on the Arctic Frontiers Conference website. This included submitting a resume, biography, photo, statement of motivation, recommendation letter from my supervisor, and videoed statement of what a “Green Shift in the Arctic” meant to me. The application deadline was mid-October, and I received my acceptance e-mail on 10 November.

All questions that I had during the application process were promptly answered by: emergingleaders@arcticfrontiers.com

Travel Arrangements:

Based on the recommendations in CDR Travers’ AAR, I chose to arrive in Bodø one day ahead of the start of Emerging Leaders to allow time for travel delays. This also allowed me to acclimate better to the time difference prior to the start of the program.

Due to the final conference activities ending in the evening and limited flights out of TOS, my travel home was going to include an overnight layover if I departed the night that the program ended. I chose to remain overnight one night in Tromsø and begin my travel on the first flight the next morning, returning to San Francisco with no overnight layovers.

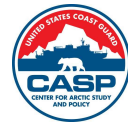
Participants:

This year’s Arctic Emerging Leaders cohort included individuals representing sixteen different nations. I was one of three Emerging leaders from the United States, and the sole military participant, although there was one Search and Rescue Programs Officer from the Canadian Coast Guard. The other two Americans were representatives from the American Red Cross of Alaska and the Renewable Energy Alaska Project. The remainder of the participants were across all types of disciplines, industries, and cultures ranging from Indigenous, business, and policy representatives to scientists.

Emerging Leaders of particular note were a Research Fellow from the Centre for North Logistics in Norway who was born in Russia and whose published PhD thesis was a feasibility analysis of commercial shipping via polar routes, particularly the Northern Sea Route, a Lithuanian PhD Candidate at Nord University whose prospective thesis is focusing on maps and imagery used during Arctic Search and Rescue operations and how they related to questions of safety and security in the region, a trainee at the Norwegian Space Agency, and a project coordinator at the Arctic Council.

Program Itinerary:

The Emerging Leaders program began in the city of Bodø, Norway located 60 miles north of the Arctic Circle, traveled north through the Lofoten Islands via bus and boat, and ended at the annual Arctic Frontiers Conference in the city of Tromsø where the Emerging Leaders attended the final three days of sessions.



During the journey north, we bonded as a cohort and participated in lectures, workgroups, and tours related to the Arctic and high north. Presentations that were particularly relevant to Coast Guard operations were a tour of the Northern Norway Joint Rescue Coordination Center in Bodø and subsequent discussion on search and rescue in the high north, a presentation of Arctic security by a senior advisor at the Norwegian Joint Headquarters, a lecture on Norwegian Space Activities in the Arctic by a Senior Advisor at the Norwegian Space Agency, and multiple presentations on Norwegian Arctic Fisheries, the nation’s relationship with Russia in that regard, and Scandinavia’s aquaculture industry.

While at the Arctic Frontiers Conference, I was able to attend multiple interesting sessions and briefly meet Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska after her involvement on a panel titled “Moving to and from the North.” I also attended a panel that discussed future international collaboration onboard scientific research vessels. This was held onboard the Norwegian polar research icebreaker *Kronsprins Haakon* and there were 9 nations represented on the panel with no representatives from the United States.

Official Schedule

Theme: The Green Shift

27 January 2023 Friday	
Meeting point at 16:00: Lobby of Scandic Bodø Hotel	
Location: Salmon Center, Bodø	
16:00 - 18:30	Welcome, introduction to mentors, program, and Arctic Frontiers. Icebreaker fun
18:45 - 20:00	Dinner
20:00 - 21:00	10 PechaKucha presentations from Emerging Leaders

28 January 2023 Saturday	
08:00 - 08:45	Breakfast
Location: Salmon Center, Bodø	
09:00 - 11:30	Presentations from local industries
11:30 - 12:00	Lunch
12:00 - 14:30	10 PechaKucha presentations from Emerging Leaders Introduction to Emerging Leader contribution to Arctic Frontiers
14:30 - 19:45	Embark on Hurtigruta to Stamsund and presentation on maritime transport
19:45	Arrival Stamsund and Bus to Lofotr Viking Museum
21:15 - 23:00	Dinner & Lofotr Viking Museum Tour
23:00 - 23:30	Bus to Kabelvåg: Arrival at Nyvågør Rorbuhotell



29 January 2023 Sunday	
Location: Nyvågar Rorbuhotell, Kabelvåg, Lofoten	
08:00 - 09:00	Breakfast at Nyvågar
09:00 - 12:00	10 PechaKucha presentations from Emerging Leaders Green Shift presentation and panel discussion
11.30 - 12:30	Lunch at Nyvågar
12:30 - 14:00	Remaining PechaKucha presentations from Emerging Leaders
14.30 - 20.00	Workshop on EL presentations
20:00 - 21:00	Dinner Nyvågar

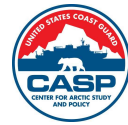
30 January 2023 Monday	
Location: Nyvågar Rorbuhotell, Kabelvåg, Lofoten	
08:00 - 09:00	Breakfast
09:00 - 12:00	Arctic fisheries and workshop
12:00 - 14:00	Lunch and tour around Kabelvåg
14:00 - 16:00	Workshop continued

16:00 - 17:00	Dinner
17:00 - 20:30	Arctic workshop
21:00	Bus to Svolvær
Location: Hurtigruten	
22:15	Embark on Hurtigruten Svolvær Norwegian Space Agency presentation

31 January 2023 Tuesday. Location: Hurtigruten	
09:00 - 12:00	Wrap up EL contributions
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch
14:15	Arrival Tromsø
Location: Comfort hotel Express, Tromsø	
14:30	Check-in Smart Hotel
Location: Arctic Frontiers conference, The Edge Hotel	
15:00 - 19:30	Attendance Arctic Frontiers conference
20:00 - 21:30	Emerging Leaders Reception, Polaria

01 February 2023 Wednesday	
Location: Arctic Frontiers conference, The Edge Hotel, Tromsø	
09:00 - 12:30	Participation in the Arctic Frontiers conference.
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch
13:30 - 15:00	Big Picture: Ocean Food
15:00 - 16:30	Big Picture: Moving to and from the North
16:30 - 18:00	Conference program
19:30	Arctic Frontiers conference Reception Dinner

02 February 2023 Thursday	
Location: Arctic Frontiers conference, The Edge Hotel, Tromsø	
9:00 - 10:30	Participation in the Arctic Frontiers conference.
11:00 - 12:30	Big Picture Energy – moving to the mixed solution? With EL brief outlook
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch
13:30 - 15:00	Big Picture: Moving into the real world
15:00 - 17:00	APECS workshop, FRAM Centre
17:00	End of program.



Benefits of Participation to a Polar Operator:

Although I had prior experience operating in and studying the Arctic, the Emerging Leaders program helped me to understand the region from the perspective of other Arctic nations. From both the conference's activities and the relationships which I built with my fellow Arctic Emerging Leaders, I learned an incredible amount and was able to leave the program with a much more complete picture of our partner nations and their varied interests in the Arctic. I also understand better the vast capabilities, infrastructure, and historical presence of many other Arctic nations and how wide the gap is with the status of America's Arctic. This experience further cemented for me the absolute necessity for strong partnerships, both internationally and with tribal and other local entities, for any increase of the Coast Guard's presence in this dynamic region to be a success.

Benefits of Participation to the Coast Guard:

In addition to improving the knowledge and experience of one Coast Guardsman who could likely be involved in future Arctic operations and strategic planning, I feel that this program makes a much broader positive impact on the service. First, numerous personnel from across the Coast Guard have reached out to discuss my participation and I have been able to share my experiences with them. During my daily work, I also have been able to use much of what I learned when talking with others assigned to *Healy*, including command, junior officers, and cadets, and members of Pacific Area Cutter Forces staff. The experience has proved useful and relevant in our routine discussions regarding Coast Guard operations in the Arctic and as we move ahead with our planning for upcoming icebreaker deployments. Second, the Coast Guard's participation very publicly demonstrates the service's full-fledged support of National Arctic Strategy objectives. While at the Arctic Frontiers Conference, I was able to interface with Alaskan Senator Lisa Murkowski, Major General (Ret.) Randy "Church" Kee, and other distinguished and politically influential leaders from Alaska. I felt my presence at the conference and as an Emerging Leader, especially as an Alaskan resident with three tours in District Seventeen, was a clear indication of the Coast Guard's commitment to furthering operations and partnerships in Alaska and the Arctic. In addition, me being a representative of *Healy* reenforced the Coast Guard's commitment to the future of the United States' icebreaking fleet.

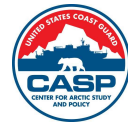
Follow-Up and Alumni Network:

Since the conference, I have maintained professional connections with my fellow Emerging Leaders through social media platforms, including LinkedIn, and a group chat on WhatsApp. A few of my peers have had the opportunity to reconnect in person at several conferences including the High North Dialogue in Bodø, the Sami Summit in Brussels, Arctic PASSION, and the Barents Sea Conference in Hammerfest.

To build connections across the Arctic Emerging Leader cohort years, following this year's conference, Arctic Frontiers created an Arctic Emerging Leaders Alumni Network on LinkedIn. This group has already hosted several networking events and serves as a platform to meet other Emerging Leaders, exchange ideas, and share content that might be relevant to program alumni. There are currently 150 members of this network.



Figure 2: 2023 Arctic Emerging Leaders at the final event of the program.



Recommendations for the Coast Guard:

Overall, I found the Arctic Frontiers Emerging Leaders 2023 Program to be a very worthwhile experience and I believe that there is considerable benefit to CASP sponsoring future Coast Guard representation in the future. After discussing my participation with other junior officers, I know that there is significant interest throughout the Coast Guard from a wide variety of very well-qualified O-2 to O-4s with very diverse operational experiences in the Arctic. In addition, there are likely many enlisted members, including icebreaker sailors, Air Station Kodiak aircrews, or those at District Seventeen sub-units that annually participate in Operation Arctic Shield, who are similarly qualified and interested. Because there are such a wide variety of potential attendees across nearly every community in the Coast Guard, I recommend that CASP publicly solicit for applicants via ALCOAST.

I learned a lot from the program and reflected considerably with the other North American participants but feel that I could have developed further with another individual of a more similar occupational background to discuss the experience with. If cohort size and funding permitted, I believe it would be beneficial to either send two Coast Guard participants from different operational communities or recruit participation from other United States defense organizations with interests in the Arctic like Alaskan or European Command. The benefits from this would be two-fold in that it would both improve joint force interoperability in the Arctic by strengthening domestic partnerships and broaden the experience and perspective of the Coast Guardsman participating.

During the process of determining how to pay the conference fees, CG-81 (Mr. Jeffrey Lester) recommended that, for future attendees, CASP work with Arctic Frontiers to have them register with SAM.gov so that the conference can receive direct payment in accordance with the Coast Guard's normal procurement procedures.

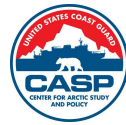
To gain the most benefit from the Emerging Leader's participation in this program, I recommend that following the conclusion of the event, CASP sponsor each year's Coast Guard attendee(s) to present an Operational Spotlight at the Coast Guard Academy or provide another avenue to engage with and educate the future leaders of our service.

Recommendations for Future Selectees:

In planning my logistics for the trip, I chose to arrive a day before the Emerging Leaders program started, which I strongly recommend for future participants. While I fortunately had no weather delays which significantly affected my itinerary, traveling in the Norwegian Arctic in January brings a high potential for logistical challenges. In addition, once the program starts, the schedule is very busy and fast-paced, so appropriately acclimating to the time zone change as quickly as possible is especially critical.

In advance of the program, I recommend that selectees seek opportunities to increase their knowledge about the European Arctic, including geography, history, and industries of this region. While I learned a lot throughout the program, I think that I would have better understood some of the early conversations of the conference if I had stronger background knowledge on issues regarding the Sami people and the historic relationships amongst Scandinavian countries.

Conclusion:



I am very appreciative for the opportunity to attend this program and cannot thank the Center for Arctic Study and Policy enough for their sponsorship of me. In particular, I would like to thank Mr. Anthony Russell and Mr. Troy Castineira for being so supportive of my attendance and assisting me throughout the entire process. I am also grateful for the support of my command cadre onboard USCGC *Healy*, CAPT Kenneth Boda and CDR Patrick Armstrong.

As I continue forward in my career, I look forward to using the knowledge gained as an Arctic Emerging Leader and will make all efforts to capitalize on any opportunities to share my experiences with other Coast Guardsmen and the broader polar network.
