Alaska Sea/River Week began with a grassroots effort by parents in Juneau in 1968 to celebrate the ocean’s bounty. The concept and related learning activities quickly spread to classrooms and communities across the state during the 1970s. The curriculum was expanded to include Alaska’s wetlands in the 1980s, and the Alaska Sea Grant College Program produced the six-volume Alaska Sea/River Week curriculum currently used by teachers. Each volume, from kindergarten through sixth grade, features a different ocean and freshwater theme.

Governor Jay Hammond recognized the value and importance of the Sea/River Week curriculum by issuing an executive proclamation on February 4, 1982, establishing April 23–May 11 as “Alaska Sea Weeks,” and encouraging residents “to learn about and gain a greater appreciation of the wonder and beauty of the ocean.”

Implemented extensively in classrooms across the state to teach students about their local resources, Alaska Sea/River Week escorts students and teachers along Alaska's coastline, which lies along two oceans and three seas and, together with the shoreline along the numerous islands, inlets, bays, fjords, and delta regions, forms a total of 34,640 miles of saltwater shoreline. Sea/River Week also takes classrooms to Alaska’s vast interior, which includes hundreds of thousands of miles of rivers and streams, and 390,941 square miles of wetlands, encompassing two-thirds of the state, all linked to the coastline by freshwater systems that serve as nurseries for Alaska's salmon and waterfowl, and as transportation arteries to and from the coast.

The National Science Teachers Association recognized the Alaska Sea/River Week Program as one of its exemplary science programs in 1986.

In 2005, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development adopted a new set of science content standards and grade level expectations for students. Beginning in 2008, students in grades 3-12 will be tested on science knowledge and concepts. Therefore, it is an important and opportune time to update, revise, and expand the popular award-winning Sea/River Week curriculum guides to align with the new education standards and requirements.

A recent three-year grant from the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development has allowed Alaska Sea Grant, in collaboration with the Center for Alaska Coastal Studies, Alaska Ocean Observing System, Alaska Fisheries Science Center, Alaska Science Consortium, and Alaska school districts, to update and expand these curriculum guides to meet the demands of education in the 21st century, align with Alaska Science Content Standards and Grade Level Expectations, and incorporate Web-supported delivery systems.

Updated Sea/River Week science education guides, developed by Alaska teachers for Alaska classrooms, will provide teachers with high-quality, standards-based curricula and professional development that:

- Align with state science content standards and grade level expectations.
- Promote hands-on science through developmentally appropriate curriculum.
- Incorporate advanced technologies into curriculum and instruction.
- Include ongoing, sustained, and intensive high quality professional development.
- Investigate the local environment to connect science concepts to the real world.
- Foster respect and appreciation for the environment in our future decision makers.
- Establish and celebrate community connections.

For more information, contact Marla Brownlee, marlabrownlee@mac.com or Sherri Pristash, s.pristash@uaf.edu. Online: alaskaseagrant.org.