Larry Hartig
Commissioner
P.O. Box 111800
Juneau, AK 99811-1800
www.dec.alaska.gov

STATE OF ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Weld Royal
Information Officer
907.465.5009
cell: 907.321.5491
weld.royal@alaska.gov

Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 19, 2010
Contact: Tim Hoffman, Division of Water, (907) 269-0598
email **timothy.hoffman@alaska.gov, www.dec.state.ak.us/water/**

DEC to collect Chukchi Sea environmental data

2-year coastal assessment will gather baseline data

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA – The Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) Alaska Monitoring and Assessment Program (AKMAP) in partnership with the University of Alaska School of Fisheries and Ocean Sciences will be collecting environmental data in the Chukchi Sea from Aug. 22 to Sept. 9 this year, and during the summer of 2011. The region being studied is the near-shore area from Point Hope to Wainwright.

AKMAP is part of the larger EPA National Coastal Assessment that is surveying the environmental condition of the nation's entire coastal water resources. Since 2001, AKMAP has conducted coastal surveys in Southeast Alaska, Southcentral Alaska, and the Aleutians.

"This year and next we are focused on the Chukchi Sea," said Doug Dasher, DEC's lead scientist for the survey. "The survey includes a comprehensive assessment of water quality, sediment and biological conditions for 50 statistically selected sites."

As funding allows, after 2011, the surveys will move north to the Beaufort Sea, then west to Bristol Bay and the Bering Sea coast.

The $2.15 million Chukchi Sea survey is taking place in late August to avoid interfering with subsistence activities and to avoid sea ice. The team of 12 researchers will be use the 115-foot *Norseman II* as their work platform. DEC and other environmental managers will use this information to support water quality evaluation, permitting action, baseline assessments, and to track environmental trends over time.

"The bottom line is this survey will provide resource managers with the high quality scientific information they need to manage Alaska's resources," said Dasher.

For more information go to DEC's website at:
http://www.dec.alaska.gov/water/wqsar/monitoring/emap_Map.htm