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January 7, 1987

COMING UP

NOAA Science Seminar Series: "The View From A Submersible: Video Highlights from the Bottom of Lake Superior;" Tom Nalepa, GLRL, WSC-5, Room 926, 10:30 a.m., Jan. 9.

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American Meteorological Society annual meeting in New Orleans, La., Jan 12-17.

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National Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Chicago, Ill., Feb. 14-18.

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GOES-H launch from Cape Canaveral, Fla., Feb. 19.

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Symposium on 180th anniversary of the founding of the "Survey of the Coast" in Rockville, Md., Feb. 26.

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**High Tides Up To Expectations:**--Extreme high (and low) tides predicted by NOAA oceanographers occurred between December 28 and January 4, generating interest by major wire services, the television networks and a variety of other major news media. The extreme tides were caused by a rare alignment of the sun, moon, and earth. NOAA warned that extreme tides might increase the threat of coastal flooding and navigational hazards, and those predictions were amply borne out; high tides and coastal flooding occurred on both coasts. The eastern seaboard was particularly hard hit as a storm during the extreme high tide period brought floods from the Carolinas to Maine. In South Carolina, where damage is reported in the millions of dollars, tides ran more than 3 feet over astronomical high tide on New Year's Day. In North Carolina tides were only slightly lower. From Hatteras north to Delaware tides ran 1-2 feet above normal. In addition to information issued on the expected tidal extremes, NOAA issued a coastal flooding watch early December 31, providing over 28 hours lead time.

**NOAA Set For Australian Study:**--A team of airborne NOAA and university researchers this month will investigate the role cloud systems play in heating the atmosphere north of Australia and the resulting effect on global climate. Most of the work will take place aboard a NOAA P-3 Orion propjet, one of the world's most heavily instrumented research aircraft, operating out of Darwin, Australia. During January the oceanic region north of Australia is part of one of the most active regions on earth for the occurrence of convective cloud systems. The primary objection of the study is to define the vertical profile of atmospheric heating produced by cloud clusters in the region. The heating profile is of critical importance for both numerical (computer-generated) weather prediction and climate studies. The researchers will use an airborne Doppler radar and other measuring devices to investigate the structure of the cloud systems. Additionally, while en route to and from Australia, the researchers will conduct several other studies including one on the distribution of ozone and the transfer of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere above the tropical Pacific. Participating with NOAA scientists are researchers from the National Center for Atmospheric Research in Boulder, Colorado State University, Penn State University, and the University of Washington.

**Competition Hot For Monitor Museum:**--NOAA has received proposals from several sources to create a museum for the display of artifacts from the Civil War Ironclad USS Monitor. Its wreck, on the Atlantic floor 16 miles off Cape Hatteras, is the Nation's first national marine sanctuary. North Carolina, the Navy, and the Smithsonian Institution have formed a consortium to bid to create a museum for Monitor artifacts; others include the Mariners Museum of Newport News, the city of Portsmouth, Va., South Street Museum of New York, and Sten Sture Nordean, a New York resident. NOAA, as manager of national marine sanctuaries, will review all bids, and a decision based on the recommendations of an independent panel of experts is expected by early March.

**Chinese Landsat Station Operational:**--The Chinese Academy of Sciences held an opening ceremony for the Peoples Republic of China Landsat station in Beijing on December 20. Landsat is a U.S. earth resources satellite. The new receiving station was installed by a U.S. firm, under contract to the Chinese. Jennifer Clapp, Deputy Chief of the NESDIS Special Programs Office, represented NOAA at the opening ceremony. Also attending were U.S. Ambassador Winston Lord and Under Secretary of Defense Stephen E. Bryen.

**Coral Reef Damage Suit Settled:**--An out-of-court settlement was announced in December in which the United States will receive \$6,275,000 over the next 15 years as a result of the grounding of the 400-foot freighter MV Wellwood on Molasses Reef in the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary off the Florida Keys on August 4, 1985.

The Justice Department had filed suit alleging damage to natural resources. It also sought civil penalties and recovery of U.S. Coast Guard salvage costs. The case had been scheduled to go to trial in U.S. District Court in Miami early this year.

The grounding of the Wellwood resulted in extensive, long-term damage to large areas of slow-growing coral formations in the Key Largo sanctuary. Despite round-the-clock efforts by the Coast Guard and private salvage firms, the vessel remained aground for 12 days. NOAA research scientists assessing damages to the reef, expect it will be many years before there is any significant recovery by the reef.

Commenting on the first court action over damages to natural resources in a national marine sanctuary, Peter Tweedt, Director of NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management said, "Boaters and ship operators should be aware of the damage that can be done to fragile marine resources when marine sanctuary regulations are violated. This settlement should demonstrate that this administration will take whatever legal steps are necessary to ensure that these nationally significant marine areas are protected."

**Great Lakes Shorelines Threatened:** The Great Lakes have risen to record levels as a result of higher than normal rainfall over the past few years, the National Weather Service reports. The waters are threatening shoreline property and, in many instances, have caused millions of dollars in damage due to overrunning and erosion. According to Billy Rice of the Marine and Applied Service Branch, the annual formation of ice, which began in December and will last through March, will compound the danger. Major storms this winter and next spring could cause permanent damage to the shoreline and structures including public facilities such as wastewater treatment plants, water intake and filtration facilities, power plants, landfills, gas lines, and sewer lines. NOAA's Great Lakes offices have been kept up to date on lake level conditions and are keeping close tabs on wind and weather conditions which could cause dangerous flooding.

**Red Drum Curtailment:**--In an effort to prevent dangerous depletion of the red drum fishery, NOAA banned its directed commercial harvesting during 1987 in federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico.

A fishery management plan, designed by the National Marine Fisheries Service, was activated late in December by Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige under the Magnuson Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

He termed the action "a matter of simple prudence," and asked the cooperation of all fishing interests involved.

Under the plan:

--An estimated 200,000 pound "incidental catch" of red drum may be landed by shrimpers who take the fish accidentally....

--Other commercial fishermen are limited to a 100,000 pound "incidental catch" of red drum.

--A one-fish bag limit per person per trip is set for recreational fishing.

--An extensive research program, with a minimum of red drum taken for this purpose, has been instituted by NOAA to determine the status of the stock.

The action was taken because the popularity of red drum, the main ingredient in a gourmet dish known as "blackened redfish," has brought alarmingly high harvests, and scientists do not know whether there are enough red drum to allow fishing to continue without depleting the species.

In June, Secretary Baldrige imposed a 90-day emergency plan setting a quota of one million pounds of red drum commercially caught in federal waters. The quota was reached in less than a month and further commercial fishing for red drum was prohibited. A second 90-day emergency plan, which expired December 23, extended the ban.

**Winter Weather Awareness Campaign:**--During a winter weather awareness campaign in Wyoming, the Weather Service Forecast Office in Cheyenne and the state's Office of Emergency Management conducted a winter safety poster contest in conjunction with the Laramie County School System. Over 500 entries were submitted for judging. Each poster was to promote or illustrate a key safety rule. Six students were honored for their creative talents. The Emergency Management office gave each of the winners a plaque. NWS awarded each winner the honorary title "Meteorologist of the Day," and an opportunity to record their safety rules on the NOAA Weather Radio for airing throughout the season.

**CAMEO Promotion Continues:**--Action has been taken to publicize on a national scale NOAA's Computer-Assisted Management of Emergency Operations (CAMEO). The mobile system to identify chemical hazards, the best way to battle them, and their probable trajectory at disaster scenes, was the subject of a media demonstration Dec. 18 in Seattle, in cooperation with the Seattle Fire Department. Local media and the Associated Press covered the event, and wire services and networks were supplied with informational materials from Washington. Follow-up efforts with TV science programs and print outlets are under way.

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# **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

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