



February 19, 1991

ASOS Contract Award Announced

Build Begins on Key Element of Weather Modernization

A nearly \$19 million NOAA contract to speed observations to airports and weather forecasters will mean a major step toward improved severe weather warning and aviation safety.

The \$18,940,000 contract, a key element in NOAA's modernization of its National Weather Service, is for the production phase of the Automated Surface Observing System (ASOS) and is jointly sponsored by the Departments of Commerce, Transportation, and Defense. It will provide an automated system to meet joint weather and aviation safety

responsibilities of NOAA, the Federal Aviation Administration, and the U.S. Navy.

1700 Units Over Five Years

The contract was awarded to the AAI Corporation of Hunt Valley, Md., which will start production leading to a maximum of 1700 units over the next five years. The total multi-year contract amount, with various options, will be in the \$200 million-plus range.

The system will speed transmission of information vital not only to aviation but to Weather Service personnel dealing with severe weather, flash flood and river flood forecasting problems.

The system will replace manual collection of surface weather observations, now done at 260 Weather Service facilities, involving the full- or part-time work of 1200 persons. ASOS, planned to go into operation 24 hours a day at up to 1700 locations, will automatically provide data on pressure, temperature, wind direction and speed, runway visibility, cloud ceiling heights, and precipitation. The information will flow directly to warning and forecast offices and local airport control towers. Computer-generated voice will broadcast weather information directly to pilots aloft nearby.

More Than 900 Sites

The ASOS sites include nearly 600 airports under FAA jurisdiction, 250 National Weather Service sites, 86 Navy sites, and two Air Force sites.

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NOAA, Students Share Science Encounters

Two NOAA experts spoke to more than 1,500 high school students from the Washington-Baltimore area on the cutting-edge issues of science as part of Science Encounters '91, sponsored by the American Association for the Advancement of Science at the Omni Shoreham Hotel, February 14.

The program is part of a national strategy aimed at enhancing the quality of science education in America by encouraging young, talented students to choose careers in science and to achieve science literacy among those who enter other academic fields.

Global Change Discussed

Eileen Shea of NOAA's Climate and Global Change Program, participating in a panel discussion of federal and academic experts, discussed how the agency is involved in the U.S. Global Change Research Program. Ms. Shea encouraged the students to consider a career in environmental science as a field.

Dr. John Miller of NOAA's Air Resources Laboratory answered questions from students at Connelly School in Potomac, Md., and the district's Maret School on pollution, the cause and effect of the ozone layer's depletion, the use of computers in atmospheric sciences, global climate change, and the climate in the Washington area.

Coming Events

■ **National Estuary Program Science Symposium '91**, a NOAA-EPA workshop to develop a report to Congress on estuarine pollution, in Sarasota, Florida, Feb. 24-27.

■ **NOAA Briefing for Foreign Science Counselors**, an overview of NOAA activities, including global climate change, coastal ocean program and data management, in Washington, D.C., Mar. 1.

AMS Panel Cheers Weather Service Plan

Government and broadcast meteorologists from the Washington area expressed their enthusiasm for a modernized NOAA National Weather Service (NWS) at a meeting of the American Meteorological Society's District of Columbia chapter February 7.

About 175 people heard a panel discussion on "Disseminating Weather Information in the 1990s," which examined the roles of the government and the media in this decade of

new technologies. Major advances in satellites, radar, sophisticated information processing and communications systems, automated remote sensors, and super-speed computers are the foundations of tomorrow's warnings and forecasts.

Panel members were Dr. Elbert Friday, NWS Assistant Administrator; Ed Gross, NWS Constituent Affairs Officer; Jim Belville, meteorologist in charge of NWS's Washington Forecast Office, and local television meteorologists Bob Ryan (Ch. 4), Sue Palka (Ch. 5), and Bill Kamal (Ch. 9).

WMO Ceremonies in Boulder

NOAA Scientists Get World Class Award

Two NOAA scientists have been presented a prestigious World Meteorological Organ-

izational (WMO) award by the WMO Secretary General, in ceremonies held in Boulder.

Dr. Richard Strauch and Kenneth Moran, both of NOAA's wave Propagation Laboratory, and Dr. Peter May of the Australian Bureau of Meteorology were presented the WMO's Professor Vilho Vaisala award at a reception Tuesday February 19th at the University of Colorado. The award is given annually for an outstanding research paper encouraging programs regarding instruments and methods supportive of meteorological programs.

The research paper discussed the accuracy of a system developed at the NOAA Laboratory for determining atmospheric temperatures at various altitudes.

Some of Dr. Strauch's other accomplishments in this field include recognition as Federal Engineer of the Year and the U.S. Department of Commerce Gold Medal for his pioneering work in profiling atmospheric wind temperature. Dr. Moran is a member of the Institute of Electric and Electronic Engineers.

First Report of Spring: No matter that the groundhog saw his shadow earlier this month—you know spring is coming because the NOAA National Weather Service's Office of Hydrology is producing the first spring flood and water supply outlook for the year. A detailed report will be sent to all Members of Congress and major water resource agencies on February 25, and at two week intervals after that through the season.

NOAA Goes Metric: In an effort to implement a metrification education program, NOAA has begun to convert all of its nautical charts to metric units. A poster explaining the metric conversion, "NOAA Goes Metric," has been produced, and will be distributed and displayed to chart users at technical conferences, boat shows, and in chart agent facilities.

Discoverer Departs: NOAA's research ship Discoverer left its home port of Seattle last week on a scientific sea mission scheduled to last more than 240 days.

On the first leg of its 240-day mission, the Discoverer will travel south to Hilo, Hawaii, then north to the Gulf of Alaska before returning to Seattle on April 5.

The crew's mission will include a wide range of oceanic research. The primary focus involves a study of the oceans ability to influence atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide, freon and climate trace gases. Other research includes studies on sea floor spreading and hydrothermal vent zones in Washington and Oregon offshore coastal waters.

NOAA NOTES

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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