

# NOAA REPORT



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April 1993

## Aquarius Subsea Research Station Heads for Florida Keys; Science Missions to Begin in September:

Aquarius, the world's most advanced underwater scientific research station, will be moved in mid-April from Miami, Fla., to the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. This undersea laboratory will be supported by a NOAA grant to the University of North Carolina at Wilmington to install Aquarius, conduct the necessary certifications and shakedown missions this summer, and begin scientific missions by university researchers in September. Aquarius, which resembles a large steel barrel, will be towed from the NOAA Ship

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Support Facility on Dodge Island, off Miami, to Conch Reef by NOAA and the university.

Research already underway by the university includes an extensive program of surface-supported dive missions and manned submersible and remotely operated vehicle operations at the Conch Reef site. This included studies of how coral reefs cleanse themselves of sediment, important for planning ecologically sound coastal development, and research into causes of coral bleaching in the Caribbean, which may provide clues to understanding the causes and effects of global climate change and the impact of pollution on coral reef ecosystems.

**Data Center Director Named AGU Fellow:** Bruce C. Douglas, director of NOAA's National Oceanographic Data

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## Heavy March Snow Leaves East Prone to Flooding: NWS

**T**he winter storm that raked the eastern U.S. deposited enough precipitation in one weekend to alter significantly the spring hydrological outlook for the eastern third of the Nation, according to National Weather Service hydrologists.

Major portions of the eastern U.S. are now at risk for springtime flooding as a result of the massive snowfall, which exceeded 12 inches along the Appalachian Mountains from northeastern Alabama to northern Maine, and topped 36

inches along the Tennessee-North Carolina border, according to Dr. Michael Hudlow, director of the weather service's Office of Hydrology.

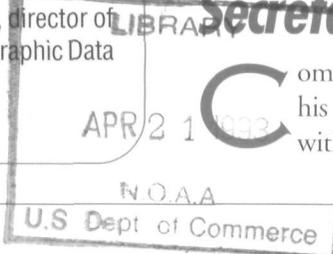
The volume of water that fell as snow may be unprecedented. NWS reports estimated it 44 million acre-feet, more than the capacity of all the reservoirs in California, and equal to 40 days' flow of the Mississippi River at New Orleans, said Frank Richards, a hydro-meteorologist with the NWS's Office of Hydrology in Silver Spring. The storm was also one of the *continued on page 2*



Commerce Secretary Ron Brown turns the tables on a NOAA employee during his recent visit to NOAA's Silver Spring offices.

## Secretary Brown Focuses on Silver Spring

Commerce Secretary Ron Brown gets on the other side of the camera during his visit last month to NOAA's offices in Silver Spring. He visited there with NOAA employees, and met with NOAA senior officials. □



# Sullivan Nominated to be Chief Scientist

**N**OAA's new leadership team gained its fourth and final member last month as The White House announced its intent to nominate as chief scientist Kathryn Sullivan, a geologist, oceanographer and NASA astronaut currently on detail to NOAA from the space agency.

Sullivan gained fame in 1984 when she became the first American woman to walk in space, aboard the space shuttle *Challenger*. Between 1976 and the present, Sullivan has served more extensively on space missions. In addition to her 1984 space walk, Sullivan served as Mission Specialist aboard the *Discovery* in 1990, which deployed the Hubble Telescope, the first mission to repair a spacecraft while in orbit. Sullivan's final mission in 1991 was as Payload Commander of the Atlas-1 Spacelab flight aboard the *Atlantis*.

## Survey & Research Cruises

But her outer space activities came grounded on a foundation of oceanographic and geological research. After earning a B.S. in Earth Sciences from the University of California at Santa Cruz in 1973, Sullivan served on several survey and research cruises such as Newfoundland Basin cruises with the Bedford Institute of Oceanography and Project FAMOUS in the Mid-Atlantic Ridge.

In 1987 she continued her oceanographic work with NOAA's National Undersea Research Program in the Bermuda Seamount, as a diving scientist on the record 6,500-foot dive on the *Pisces VI*. She later earned a Ph.D. in Geology from Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1978.

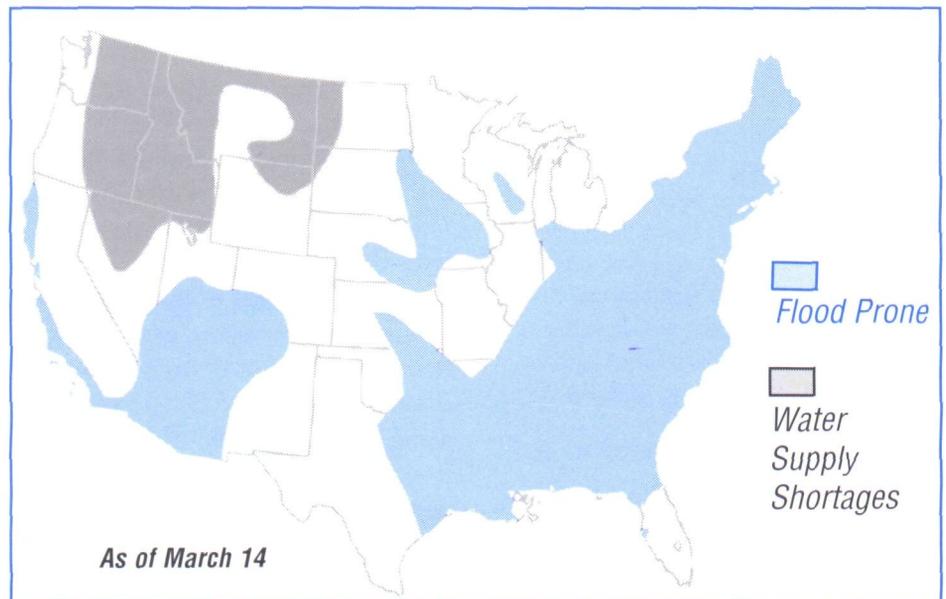
Pending her confirmation by the Senate, Sullivan joins the three other

NOAA senior leaders, also recently announced by the Clinton Administration. They are:

- Dr. D. James Baker, named as NOAA Administrator and

Commerce Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere;

- Douglas Hall, named as NOAA Deputy Administrator and Commerce Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, and
- Diana Josephson, named as Commerce Deputy Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere. □



*NWS hydrologists foresee flooding in the east and parts of the southwest, and water supply problems in the northwest.*

## Northeast Flooding Possible: NWS

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most heralded, he noted, having been accurately predicted days ahead of time, well before it actually formed in the Gulf of Mexico.

### River Basins at Risk

In the northeast, where spring flooding is usually caused by a combination of melting snow and rain, the mammoth snowfall was enough to create the potential for damaging floods all by itself. Areas at risk include the Ohio, Tennessee and Susquehanna River basins, as well as most smaller basins to the north into New England.

In the West, almost daily rains have put the six-year California

drought to an end. However, major portions of the Columbia and upper Missouri River Basin reservoirs remain precariously low. The break in the drought also brought major flooding to southern California and much of Arizona. Spring flooding is of particular concern in Arizona on the Gila, Salt and Verde Rivers.

Although many other areas west of the Rockies have extreme snow depths, there is little serious risk of snow melt flooding because of the long drought. Parched soils are expected to absorb spring melting, and most reservoirs have built up substantial storage capacity. □

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# Valdez Fines to Protect Alaska Habitats

Some \$25 million in penalties collected from Exxon Corp. for environmental damage caused by grounding of its tanker Exxon Valdez in Alaska's Prince William Sound will be used to buy land and protect critical wildlife habitat in the affected area, Commerce Secretary Ronald H. Brown told Congress last month.

Brown's comment was in testimony in behalf of the Clinton administration before the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee. He spoke as the representative of a three-member cabinet level board of trustees overseeing restoration of fish and wildlife populations and other natural resources damaged by the oil spill.

Other members are Mike Espy, Secretary of Agriculture, and Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the Interior.

NOAA was a major player in the federal government effort to clean up the spill and assess the damage it had done to Prince William Sound.

"We are fully committed to expediting the restoration process to the greatest extent possible," Brown said. "Our goal is to bring greater

protection for fish and wildlife." He said the \$25 million will be spent in fiscal years 1993-94.

## \$125 Million to Settle Charges

Exxon agreed in 1991 to pay \$125 million to Alaska and the federal government in settlement of criminal charges relating to the tanker grounding, with \$50 million specified for federal restoration projects in the state.

"I am pleased that the three departments have worked together as the people's trustees," said Espy. "The \$25 million we spend on habitat acquisition and restoration is one way we can demonstrate that we are serious about putting right the wrongs caused by the spill."

## 'Overwhelmingly Advocated': Babbitt

The three trustees had little



NOAA crews helped to clean up the aftermath of the Exxon Valdez spill in Alaska's Prince William Sound. Here, oil-covered seabirds had washed ashore in Paule Bay, near the Sound.

## Taking Stock of U.S. Savings Bonds

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difficulty on deciding how to allocate the \$25 million, said Babbitt.

"Since the settlement was first announced nearly 18 months ago, the public has overwhelmingly advocated prompt action to protect critical Alaskan habitat in order to restore wildlife populations," Babbitt said, "therefore the decision on how to spend these funds was quite clear."

The three federal agencies will concentrate on acquiring property for Kenai Fjords National Park, Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge, Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Islands, Chugach National Forest, among others.

The announcement complements joint federal-state programs to employ some \$900 million Exxon agreed to pay over a 10-year period as part of the 1991 civil settlement.

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Center, has been elected to Fellowship in the American Geophysical Union. He was cited for his "contributions to the use of artificial satellites for geodesy and geophysics."

Before joining the data center in 1992, Douglas served as chief of the Geosciences Laboratory with NOAA's National Ocean Service. He has published extensively in satellite geodesy and oceanography, and has served as editor of the *Journal of Geophysical Research*. Douglas has also served as principal investigator in numerous oceanographic satellite projects and developed NOAA's Geosat oceanographic satellite program. He was project manager for NOAA's Global Sea Level program from its inception in 1989 until 1992. Douglas holds a Department of Commerce Silver Medal and a Presiden-

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tial-level Meritorious Executive Award. He is also a Fellow of the International Association of Geodesy and holds bachelor's and master's degrees from UCLA.

**Petition to Ease Sanctuary Restrictions Rejected:** NOAA has rejected a petition from an association of personal water craft manufacturers asking the Government to lift restrictions on jet skis in California's Monterey National Marine Sanctuary.

In rejecting the claim, NOAA said that motorized personal water craft, because of their small size and high speed and maneuverability, did pose a threat to the sanctuary's resources, particularly to sea otters and seabirds, which could be injured by the craft or frightened enough to stop feeding or to abandon their young. NOAA also claimed that the craft interfered with sailing, surfing and diving. Regulations limit Jet Skis and similar motorized craft to four areas and access routes in the 5,300-square mile sanctuary. □

## Soviet Breakup Means Red Tag Sale For NOAA Researchers in Siberia

**R**esearch scientists from U.S. government agencies will visit Siberia later this month to investigate the potential of using Russian aircraft and operational bases there for Arctic environmental research and monitoring activities.

Coordinated by Russell Schnell, a NOAA specialist in Arctic research, and Anthony D.A. Hansen of Lawrence Berkeley Laboratories, the familiarization visit will expose scientists to the moderately priced logistical support available from Russian sources in eastern Siberia.

Schnell and Hansen last year used a Russian aircraft and support facilities to investigate what was believed to be methane plumes rising out of the ocean from around Bennett Island in the Siberian Sea. They learned the plumes, first seen in satellite images, actually were clouds.

### Services Available at Reduced Prices

Equally important, Hansen said, the researchers learned that because of the collapse of the former USSR infrastructure, facilities and services useful for scientific research are

available at cut-rate prices in Siberia.

Research aircraft especially built for Arctic conditions are available at extremely low rental costs at an air base at Cherskiy, Siberia, as are all the needed supportive services, according to Hansen. It was from this base he and Schnell conducted their Bennett Island methane research.

Hansen said a number of agencies including NOAA, the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency have signed up for the trip. EPA scientists are interested in visiting Noril'sk, Siberia, one of the world's largest metal smelting centers, to plan a joint research monitoring expedition with the Russians later in the year.

In addition, a scientist from NOAA's Climate Monitoring and Diagnostics Laboratory in Boulder, Colo., carrying air sampling equipment, will gather air data along a chartered aircraft flight path during the entire trip.

It is believed, Hansen said, this is the first time a charter arrangement of this sort has been accomplished with the Russians. □

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### Address comments to:

Editor  
NOAA Report  
NOAA Office of Public Affairs  
6013 Herbert C. Hoover Building  
Washington, DC 20230  
202-482-6090 (voice)  
202-482-3154 (fax)

### Banyan E-Mail Address:

JerryS@PA@NOAA

Timothy A. Tomastik  
Acting Director, Public Affairs  
Jerry Staff ..... Editor

# **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

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