NOAA REPORT

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West Coast El Niño Storms To Be Studied This Winter: Winter storms in California and Oregon—with the possibility of increased rainfall due to El Niño are being studied by government and university scientists hoping to improve forecasts of heavy rain, snow and wind along the West Coast. The study, called CALJET (California Land-Falling Jets Experiment), began on Dec. 1, and includes scientists and forecasters from NOAA, the U.S. Navy, and various universities. It is particularly timely with the onset of the severe storms last week along the California coast. The study will run through March of 1998, which is the wet season in that area.

News Briefs

Aquarius Returned To Sea Floor Off Key Largo: Aquarius, the world's only underwater laboratory, was reinstalled this month on the sea floor at a depth of 63 feet at Conch Reef in the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. After a series of systems tests, certification and dive training, science missions in Aquarius will resume in late March or April. Aquarius makes it possible for aquanaut-scientists to live and work under water continuously during 10-day missions to study North America's largest living coral reef system.

With eight science missions planned for 1998, Aquarius is the centerpiece of NOAA's comprehensive environmental research program aimed at better understanding and preserving endangered coral reef ecosystems in U.S. waters.

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Terry Garcia, formerly NOAA's General Counsel, was confirmed by the Senate as the agency's Assistant Secretary in November, filling the vacancy at the number two position left when Douglas Hall returned to the Nature Conservancy last year.

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Former General Counsel Takes No. 2 Spot

Garcia Confirmed As New Assistant Secretary

Last month, Terry Garcia was confirmed by the Senate as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Deputy Administrator. He brings extensive financial and business experience to the position.

Before joining NOAA as General Counsel in 1996, Garcia was a partner in the Los Angeles law firm of Manatt, Phelps and Phillips, where he represented financial institutions in all aspects of their operations, including Federal and state regulations and legislation, corporate and securities matters, mergers and acquisitions, bank operations, and enforcement and administrative proceedings.

His legislative background includes stints with the International Development Cooperative Agency, New Directions, and the United Nations Association. He received his bachelor's degree from American University in Washington, and his law degree from George Washington University, also in Washington.

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RECYCLED PAPER

Maine Takes Lead for Atlantic Salmon

The National Marine Fisheries Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service withdrew a proposal to protect Atlantic salmon in seven Maine rivers under the federal Endangered Species Act earlier this month, allowing a cooperative recovery effort spearheaded by the State of Maine.

Officials emphasized that the recovery of Atlantic salmon stocks depends on full implementation and monitoring of Maine's newly developed Atlantic Salmon Conservation Plan.

"This plan, which was developed by a state-appointed task force with input and advice from federal fisheries scientists, is an innovative effort to resolve the real world conflicts that occur when preserving a species clearly means rethinking traditional uses of a river," said Terry Garcia, NOAA Deputy Administrator. "Our decision to protect salmon through this plan rather than through a listing under the Endangered Species Act highlights the ESA's flexibility and our willingness to consider state-designed plans." (See interview with Terry Garcia, page 1.)

"We are unlocking the full potential of rivers in Maine and opening a new chapter in conservation history," said Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt.

The cooperative recovery effort includes state, Federal and private programs and is only the second of its kind in the nation approved for a fish species. It includes continuing broodstock development and stocking of Atlantic salmon in rivers, upland habitat improvement, construction of fish weirs on some of the rivers, changes in both aquaculture and agriculture operations to reduce their threats to salmon survival, and continuing monitoring and research programs to evaluate and improve progress.

The National Seafood HACCP Alliance, was represented at the award ceremony by (left to right): Shirley Fiske (NOAA/National Sea Grant Office), Phyllis Anderson (National Performance Review Board, Office of the Vice President), and Steve Otwell (Florida Sea Grant Extension Service and Alliance Chair).

Seafood Safety Effort Gets the Hammer

The National Seafood HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) Alliance, organized through the efforts of NOAA's National Sea Grant Program Extension Service, was recently honored with Vice President Gore's National Performance Review Board Hammer Award.

The award is presented to "partnerships that make significant contributions in improving the way Federal agencies accomplish their responsibilities." Recipients of the awards were representatives from the four major Alliance partners–the National Sea Grant College Program, the Sea Grant Extension Service, the Association of Food and Drug Officials, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

The National Seafood HACCP Alliance is a story of government agencies teaming with industry and academia to promote seafood safety and to help the U.S. seafood industry meet government requirements.

NOAA's National Sea Grant College Program not only helped form the Alliance but also developed training materials and provided the training to begin this revolutionary safety-assurance process for the entire U.S. seafood industry. Sea Grant also provided some of the scientific research behind the implementation guidelines. And all of this was done without the creation of a costly new program. In addition to the four major Alliance partners who received the award, other partners include the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service; the National Marine Fisheries Service; the National Fisheries Institute; National Food Processors Association; Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference; and state agencies dealing with health, food safety and commerce. Sea Grant will continue to guide the seafood HACCP implementation efforts through the Alliance for the next two years, as well as direct some of its research toward seafood safety.

Undisturbed Area in Teeming Northeast

Cousteau Honored with Estuarine Reserve

Famed ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau, whose 60-year odyssey with the sea advanced marine environmental protections, was honored in a dedication ceremony for the newest estuarine reserve in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. On October 20, 1997, the Mullica River-Great Bay NERR in New Jersey, the 22nd in the system, was renamed the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve at Mullica River-Great Bay, New Jersey.

Regarded as one of the least disturbed estuaries in the densely populated northeast, the new reserve encompasses more than 114,000 acres of brackish marsh, lowland forests, open waters and barrier islands. Within its boundaries live

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NOAA Assistant Administrator Dr. Nancy Foster learns something new about the reserve from Dr. Frederick Grassle, director of the Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences and Commissioner Robert Shinn.

Calif. Sanctuary Oil Spill Brings Memories of 1969 Disaster

An underwater pipe leaked some 200 to 500 barrels of heavy crude oil into the waters off Santa Barbara County, California, near the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary on September 29, reminding that state's residents of another more devastating spill in 1969.

An oil-covered bird injured during the September oil spill in the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary

That oil spill, nearly thirty years ago, released four million gallons and destroyed wildlife in the hundreds. The national outcry that followed led to the creation of the National Marine Sanctuary program, which this year celebrates its 25th anniversary.

September's spill in the Channel Islands sanctuary covered four miles by two miles from shore. Staff from the Channel Islands and Monterey Bay sanctuaries participated in wildlife recovery and damage assessment via aircraft, vessel, and beach patrol. Authorities are monitoring birds exposed to the oil slick. Approximately 30 birds were killed.

—Nancy O'Donnell

Focus On...

Terry Garcia New Assistant Secretary

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Garcia took time from his schedule to answer questions from NOAA Report late last month.

AGENCY AND PERSONAL PRIORITIES

NOAA Report: Your predecessor as Assistant Secretary, Doug Hall, took fisheries as his main priority. What do you see yourself focusing on, and what do you see as the agency's priorities?

Garcia: I'm going to continue the focus on fisheries, but also focus on coastal and resource management issues generally. I'm also going to be spending time with Dr. Baker, dealing with a number of other issues, not the least of which is the completion of the modernization of the weather service, implementation of the Kelly report, and a variety of financial management issues affecting NOAA and the Department.

ROLE AS GENERAL COUNSEL

Q: Do you see your previous role as NOAA general counsel as a good preparation for this job?

Garcia: I do. It gave me a solid understanding of NOAA programs.

The general counsel's office has to represent all programs and line organizations. So I had some familiarity with every program in the agency as well as the Department of Commerce. I dealt with the Secretary's office and the general counsel's office of the Department regularly. Those relationships are valuable.

EXPECTATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Q: Now that you're officially confirmed for the job, and no longer "acting," is it different than what you expected? What's been your toughest challenge the past year?

Garcia: The variety of work and issues is a constant source of challenge. As general counsel, I saw the

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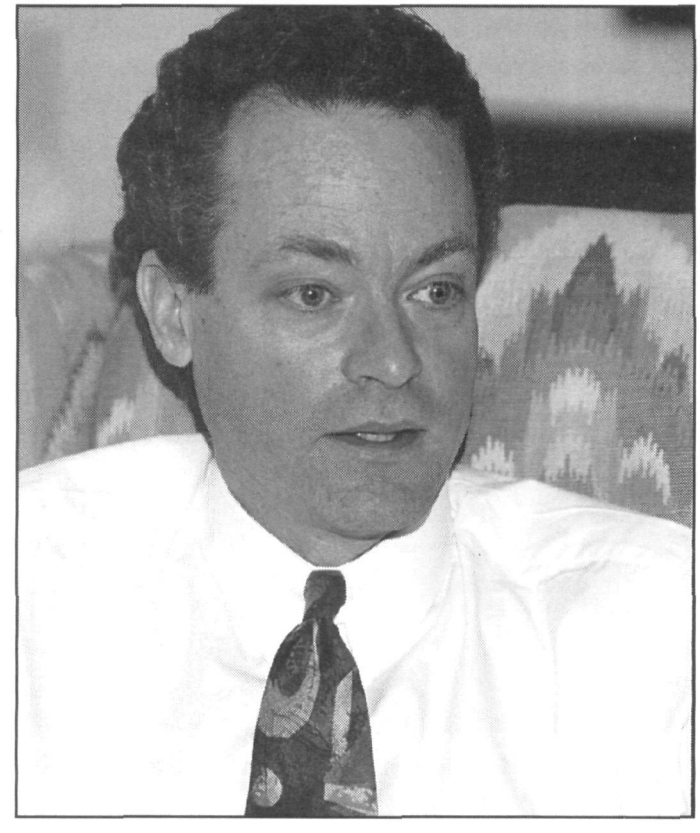

[I've got] a fascinating job. I think it's one of the best in Washington.

breadth of the agency and issues that we deal with. In this office I'm now confronted with having to make the decisions on whether or not to implement some of these programs and regulations and making the hard decisions on where to move the agency over the next several years.

Q: Do you enjoy that?

Garcia: Yes. It's a fascinating job. I think it's one of the best in Washington.

We have an opportunity here at NOAA and the Department of Commerce to do something that no other agency in Washington does. And that's to combine two disciplines, two goals—the Commerce mission to sustain the economy, and the NOAA mission of a healthy environment—and to make the point to the American public that we can't have a sustainable economy without a healthy environment. They are inextricably linked.

There are also a number of cross-cutting issues before the Department of Commerce that we have an opportunity to take advantage of to get across our message and fulfill our mission. Just look at, for example, some of the recent problems we've had in coastal areas, such as the pfiesteria problem that Maryland experienced, or red tides in the Gulf of Mexico. Every single coastal state in the country has experienced similar problems. The U.S. economy has lost a billion dollars over the last decade as a result.

That is not an abstract environmental concern. The degradation of habitat in coastal waters is affecting our economy in a very big way. It's tangible. We have an opportunity to use the resources and expertise of both NOAA and the Department of Commerce to address this problem, and we are uniquely situated. The Department of Interior doesn't have that responsibility. The EPA doesn't have it. We're the only agency that combines those two missions, the economy and the environment.

HOW NOAA FITS INTO COMMERCE

Q: Which brings up the question of how and if NOAA fits into Commerce.

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Garcia: 'Maintain the Integrity of Our Science'

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Garcia: I think it fits. The information and services we provide are absolutely essential to the functioning of a modern economy and society. Without our programs—whether it is the Weather Service, the satellite program, our other predictive and assessment programs, or our resource management activities—we cannot be successful as a Nation. The Department of Commerce has the responsibility for helping the Nation achieve sustainable economic growth. NOAA is an integral and essential part of that mission.

Q: Do you see us working closer with other Commerce agencies?

Garcia: Yes—absolutely. The Secretary and his team are making that point over and over again. So I'm very optimistic about what we can do as part of the department.

HOT ISSUES FOR 1998

Q: What are some of the hot issues for the coming year?

Garcia: The Weather Service budget and the implementation of the Kelly report are important and ongoing issues. Recovery of endangered species and in particular West Coast salmon continues to be an enormously controversial and important issue for NOAA fisheries. Coastal problems are emerging as a significant issue. The Vice President has announced a clean water initiative in which we are participating along with a number of other agencies—EPA, Agriculture, and Interior. We're going to continue to focus attention and resources here at NOAA and at the department on that issue. As I said the pfiesteria crisis in Maryland and Virginia just points up the importance of these types of issues, and they're not going to go away anytime soon. We're going to see problems such as harmful algae blooms and red tides and pfiesteria only increase in frequency and severity.

Fisheries is continuing to work on implementing the Magnuson Act, which is perhaps one of the most significant environmental action of the last Congress. There are several legislative initiatives that we've been actively involved in such as the reauthorization of the Endangered Species Act, and Superfund will continue to play a key role in these legislative debates.

We must continue our effort to maintain the integrity of the NOAA science enterprise. As I noted at my confirmation hearing, science is the critical underpinning for all of our efforts. There are no shortcuts to or end runs around good science.

Finally, sound observational and monitoring capability is vital to NOAA. I am committed, as is Dr. Baker, to streamlining personnel and processes, and instituting controls and procedures designed to eliminate cost overruns, schedule delays, and systems obsolescence.

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We've gotten very good support from the President and the Vice President for our programs, and I see that continuing.

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WHITE HOUSE EVENTS

Q: We've participated in quite a few White House events recently. Do you see that increasing?

Garcia: I think so. The White House has been very interested in our programs. As you know, the President emphasized the environment during his re-election campaign. It's been a theme throughout this administration. Again, you go back to the Department of Commerce mission—sustainable development, sustainable economies, and a healthy environment, and yes, it is going to be the focus. It has to be the focus.

We've gotten very good support from the President and the Vice President for our programs and I see that continuing.

MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE

Q: What do you see as the most important issue you've worked on here?

Garcia: One of our most significant accomplishments has been in the area of resource management. Last April we introduced a new and different approach to resource management, which involved working with the state of Oregon to develop a conservation plan for coastal coho. That effort allowed us to avoid listing the species under the Endangered Species Act. This was the first time that anyone had successfully used a state conservation plan to avoid a listing. If it's implemented successfully by the state, and I have every reason to believe it will be, we will have accomplished an extraordinary feat. It will be good for the fish, for the people of Oregon, and the endangered species program.

I believe we can follow the Oregon model in other regions. Rather than a prescriptive, command-and-control approach, we are saying to the states, our goal is to recover endangered species. If you can do a better job, if you can come up with a plan that will provide greater benefits for the resource, we'd like to work with you.

The response to the Oregon plan has been heartening. I think we are going to make a difference in other parts of the country. We must take advantage of the enormous flexibility inherent in the Endangered Species Act. We must involve everyone affected by a listing decision and the efforts to recover a species, and discard divisive legislation and the other polarizing tactics that eat away at our collective ability to get the job done well. If we do this, there will be a huge benefit to all parties. (Note: For another example, see the article, "*Maine Takes Lead for Atlantic Salmon,*" page 2.)

QUALITY OF NOAA EMPLOYEES

Q: Coming from the outside, what has been the most remarkable realization about working in the government?

Garcia: I was impressed, and continue to be, with the quality of work produced every day. When I was in the general counsel's office, I was impressed with the quality and dedication of lawyers, and the individuals in the program offices.

One of the constant frustrations I have is when I travel around the country and hear people criticize the Federal government, and Federal workers. Having worked with NOAA personnel, I know how far off the mark that really is. This agency and this Department consists of very dedicated, hard-working people who are doing a superb job for the country and the environment.

—JS

NOAA Weather Radio Codes Available by Phone, Internet: A new generation of NOAA Weather Radio receivers introduced this fall enables listeners to screen out official National Weather Service watches and warnings that do not apply to their geographic area. Now the NWS is making it easier for owners of these specially-equipped receivers to get the state and county code needed for programming the receivers through a toll-free telephone number.

"This new warning procedure is a breakthrough because it lets NOAA Weather Radio listeners screen out the severe weather alarms they don't want to hear," said Louis J. Boezi, National Weather Service deputy director for modernization. "If listeners are awakened at 3 a.m. for a severe weather warning 75 miles away, they may eventually tune out all together. We don't want that to happen."

News Briefs

Receivers equipped with Specific Area Message Encoding (SAME) technology allow listeners to choose which counties their radio will sound an alarm for when official NWS watches and warnings are issued. Older NOAA Weather Radio receivers continue to work, but these older receivers do not allow listeners to screen out weather service alarms for individual counties.

By calling 1-888-NWR-SAME (1-888-697-7263), listeners can use a touch-tone telephone keypad to enter the state and county of interest to get the SAME codes they need to program their receiver. The list of codes also is available from the NWS on the Internet at *http://www.nws.noaa.gov/nwr.*

N.J. NERR Dedicated to Cousteau

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endangered species like the bald eagle and peregrine falcon. Because the reserve is so "clean," scientists studying different estuaries use it as a baseline, comparing it to other vulnerable environmental systems.

NOS Assistant Administrator Dr. Nancy Foster joined New Jersey Congressmen James Saxton and Frank LoBiondo, state officials, teachers and schoolchildren in a daylong celebration.

In a speech outside Rutgers Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences, Foster applauded the NERR program and its network of partnerships.

"The NERR program is built on partnerships: state and local governments, the public, and interest groups. We are especially grateful for our partnerships with academia—Rutgers, the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey—as well as the other and public and private organization," said Foster.

Congressman Saxton, who originated the proposal to name the reserve in honor of Cousteau, said he believed that the marine explorer's mission to understand the mysteries of the ocean made his name the appropriate choice for a reserve whose research has the same aim for estuaries.

According to Commissioner Robert Shinn of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, the new reserve is also the first estuary in the system that includes part of the continental shelf, a place where Cousteau concentrated much of his study.

Although the official naming took place in October, scientists have already helped train teachers from 14 New Jersey school systems to teach environmental and marine science. Two hundred elementary school students attended the dedication ceremony which included interactive programs and a field trip of the reserve.

A teacher taking part in the event said that it is easier to teach children when they're excited about the topic. Many of the children live near the wetlands, and though familiar with it, are discovering its important role in the environment.

—Nancy O'Donnell

Gulf Recreational Fishing Chief Named

C. Michael Bailey has been named NMFS Gulf of Mexico Recreational Fisheries Coordinator, a new position responsible for coordinating and implementing agency recreational fisheries programs in the area.

"Opening or improving lines of communication with recreational fishers is a high priority for the fisheries service," said Bailey.

Bailey will concentrate his efforts on building a foundation for increasing partnership opportunities, building on and expanding education and outreach efforts, and increasing recreational fishing opportunities.

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Address comments to:
Editor
NOAA Report
NOAA Office of Public Affairs
14th St. & Constitution Ave. NW
Room 6013 HCHB
Washington, DC 20230-0001
202-482-6090 *(voice)*
202-482-3154 *(fax)*
Banyan E-Mail: jerrys@pa@noaa
Internet: jerry.slaff@noaa.gov
NOAA Report Online: *http://www.noaa.gov/public-affairs/nr*
Lori Arguelles ..... Director, Office of Public Affairs
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