

# NOAA REPORT



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**Sea Lions, Seals Harm Salmon Stocks:** Rapidly growing populations of California sea lions and Pacific harbor seals on the West Coast can harm salmon stocks, especially those fish listed or proposed to be listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, according to a draft NMFS report to Congress. Although not the primary cause for the salmon's decline, both seals and sea lions are known to eat fish from these stocks, especially at areas of restricted passage, like river mouths and dams, and this may prevent or delay the salmon's recovery.

## News Briefs

In addition, the report said, sea lions and harbor seals and their expanding distribution are interfering with commercial and sport fishing and damaging private property from Southern California north to Washington's Puget Sound. Some aggressive animals may also be a threat to public safety at certain locations. The 17-page draft report will be available for public comment until late June.

**Going, Going, GOES:** The third in a series of five advanced U.S. weather satellites is being prepared for an April 24, 1997 launch from Cape Canaveral Air Station. The Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite, now called NOAA GOES-K, will be renamed NOAA GOES-10 once orbit is achieved. It is currently being processed for launch at

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CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

*Riverfront Stadium, home of the Cincinnati Reds (center), sits in the middle of the flooded Ohio River last month. Quick warnings from the weather service saved the park's \$2 million astroturf field from damage which could have postponed Opening Day of the Reds' season.*

### Cincinnati Stadium No Field of Streams

## NWS Flood Warnings Save Opening Day From Washout

National Weather Service flood warnings saved Opening Day for the Cincinnati Reds by giving the management at Cinergy Field enough time to close flood gates and activate pumps to keep the Ohio River out of a stadium previously known as "Riverfront."

"Weather Service flood warnings not only saved opening day, but also kept a new, \$2 million dollar astroturf installation from being ruined," reported Suzanne Burck, stadium coordinator for Hamilton County. "Water from the Ohio River did not

get in as flood waters surrounded the stadium," Burck said.

### Worst Flooding Since 1964

The early March flooding was the worst since 1964, according to Ken Haydu, meteorologist-in-charge of the National Weather Service Forecast Office at Wilmington, Oh., which issued the warning. "We predicted the crest of the river to within one foot," the meteorologist said, adding that key components of the NWS modernization effort—Doppler radar and weather satel-

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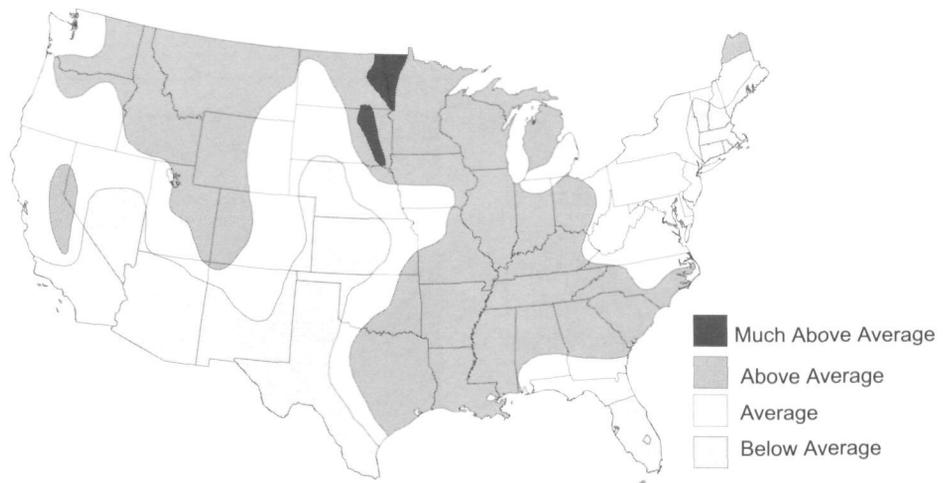
**Most in Decade**

# Widespread Flooding Seen for Spring

**M**ore of the country is likely to see flooding this year than in any year in the past decade, according to NOAA hydrologists who released their annual Spring Hydrologic Outlook last month.

With the high prospect of severe flooding in the upper Midwest and significant probabilities for some flooding in the West; the Mississippi, lower Missouri and Ohio valleys; and in parts of the Southeast, officials with NOAA's National Weather Service stressed the need for people to know what to do to protect themselves during flood events.

"We're very concerned that people recognize the dangers of floods and flash floods and take appropriate action," said Elbert W. Friday Jr., NOAA assistant administrator for weather services. "During the recent flooding in the Ohio river basin, more than 20 people lost their lives. Many people perished in vehicles,



*With much of the country under the potential threat of above average flooding, weather service officials are stressing the dangers of floods and flash floods, and what people can do to protect themselves during floods.*

Hydrologic Information Center in Silver Spring, Md. "Snow cover in this area has unusually high water content. In addition, flooding is forecast to be widespread in the eastern Dakotas, southern portions of Minnesota and Wisconsin, and northern Iowa. As a result of inflow

significantly above average. Locations on the lower Milk River in northeast Montana are expected to reach record levels. Much of Washington and northern Oregon also have exceptional snowpacks and are in jeopardy of spring flooding.

While deep snow in the central and southern Sierra threaten the possibility of snow melt flooding in western Nevada and the Sacramento and San Joaquin River drainages in California, six weeks of generally dry conditions have significantly reduced the flood risk in much of the far West.

Other areas of elevated risk for spring flooding include the Great Lakes region and much of the Southeast from eastern Texas through South Carolina, excluding Florida and southern parts of Alabama and Georgia.

"Large accumulations of snow can be a key factor in springtime flooding," said Richards, "but the degree of flooding depends not only on snow cover but also on how saturated the

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and most of these fatalities occurred in areas that were under flash flood or flood warnings. In many cases, the loss of life was preventable."

**Record Flooding in Upper Midwest**

"The Red River of the North in North Dakota and Minnesota and the James River in South Dakota could see record flooding," said Frank Richards, chief of the NWS

from so many tributaries, minor to moderate flooding is a virtual certainty on the lower Missouri and on the Mississippi rivers."

To the west, there is also considerable concern for spring flooding in the northern and central Rocky Mountains, particularly in Idaho and parts of Montana, Wyoming, Utah and Colorado, as snowpack totals are

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## One Year Ago...

One year ago this month, we were in mourning. For some, it seems so long ago. For others, like yesterday.

We remember our colleagues, lost on a hill in Croatia that spring day. We miss them, for we too were part of their family, and they were part of ours.

We also remember our Federal colleagues lost two years ago this month in the

explosion at the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. Designers of Internet web pages throughout the Federal government are using a teddy bear logo (above) on their pages to commemorate this tragedy. ☹



The staff of NOAA Public Affairs, headed by director Lori Arguelles (left), presented the Commerce Department Diversity Library in Washington with five commemorative books on the first anniversary of the plane crash that took the lives of Secretary Ron Brown and 11 other Commerce Department employees. The February contribution also was in honor of African American History Month. Accepting for the library were Vera Whisenton (center), Commerce Library director, and Commerce Administrative Operations chief Robert Galpin (right).

## We Save Their Astroturf

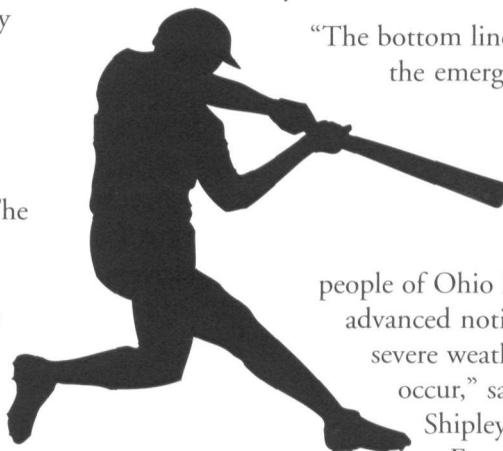
# Early Weather Service Flood Warnings Make Cincinnati Reds Safe at Home

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lites—paid off handsomely during the flood event.

Haydu praised the state's emergency management community for excellent services and assistance. "The State of Ohio Rain-Snow Monitoring System, or STORMS, was invaluable in providing up-to-the-minute data from its automated gage network," Haydu said.

"Accurate and up-to-date flood warnings are the intended result of many months of foresight and planning by a partnership



between state and Federal agencies," Haydu noted.

"The bottom line is that the emergency management community and the

people of Ohio had advanced notice that severe weather would occur," said Dale Shipley, Ohio Emergency Management

Agency deputy director. "Cooperation between state and federal agencies was critical as flood warning

information was developed and disseminated to the public," Shipley said from the state's emergency operations center in Columbus.

"We are pleased to know that the baseball season will begin on time for a city that has endured a tremendous amount of hardship during the flood," said Haydu, whose office issued a total of 62 Flash Flood and Flood Warnings during the event with an accuracy rate of over 90 percent. Sixty five River Flood Warnings and Statements were also issued to warn of the high water.

The preparations worked—the Reds beat the Colorado Rockies on Opening Day, 11-4.

—Bob Chartuk ☹

# Focus On...

## Immersion Therapy: A Personnel Advisor Goes to Sea

NOAA human resources advisor David Nettleton, usually stationed in a small but warm cubicle in Silver Spring, Md., took part in NOAA's Voluntary Observing Ship program earlier this year. His observations follow:

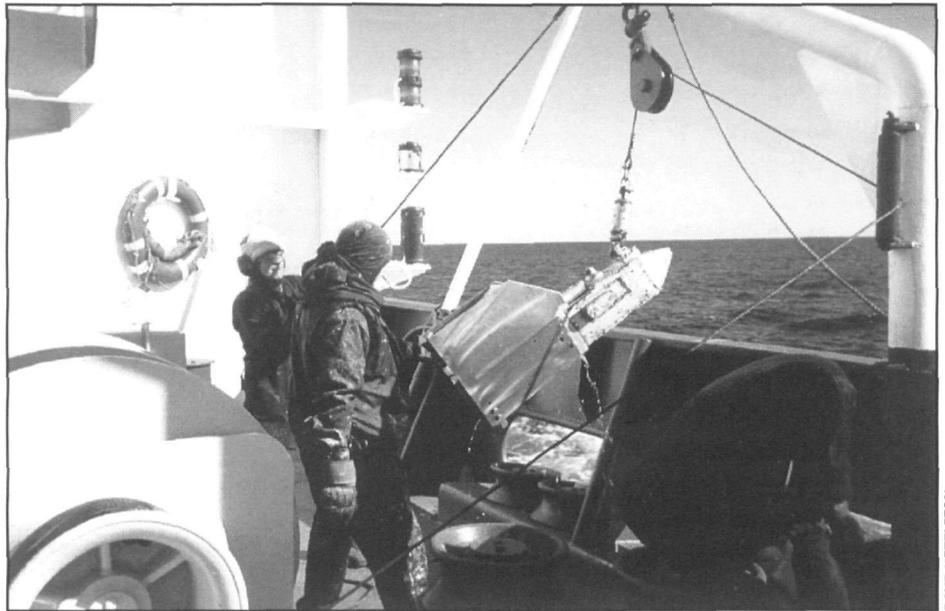
Each week, a privately owned container ship, the *CV Oleander*, treks across a small part of the Atlantic—610 nautical miles back and forth between Port Elizabeth, New Jersey and the island of Bermuda.

As part of the National Weather Service's Voluntary Observing Ship (VOS) program, the *Oleander* records and reports weather observations via satellite. It also works in conjunction with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), providing data for use in fishery surveys between the east coast of the United States and Bermuda.

### VESSEL WHILE YOU WORK

Once a month, this vessel allows a NOAA volunteer on board, to gather plankton, temperature, and salinity data. With these data NOAA can, among other things, assess where certain fish feed, insert water temperatures into weather forecast models to increase their accuracy and further understand the Gulf Stream's effect on large scale weather patterns.

Lured initially by the ship's destination, its free food and lodging...and also, of course, with the prospect of working "in the field," I volunteered



DAVE NETTLETON

*Data gathering is cool because you get to throw neat stuff overboard. But you've got to reel it back later. Bummer.*

and embarked for six days at sea on February 7, 1997 after half a day of training.

I'm an advisor in the NOAA Human Resource Management Office ("Personnel" to the outside world), about as far away from plankton and field duty as you can get.

On any given day, I process employee personnel actions, answer questions on the Thrift Savings Plan, advise management on office reorganization or classify a position's series and grade. A typical day for me usually doesn't involve taking scientific measurements and samples on board a container ship at sea. That's the work of the meteorologists, fishery biologists, cartographers

and other scientists the Human Resources office supports.

Why was I onboard the *Oleander*? More than the need for a volunteer data gatherer to brave the February weather (and pay his way to and from the vessel, by the way), I felt the trip would increase my awareness of how our work ties into the field professions we support.

Well, I was right. You can read all the position descriptions and articles you want about the products and services that NOAA employees research, create and offer the people of the Nation, but until you observe these products in action and contribute to their creation, until you are 300 miles offshore and your life may

depend on their accuracy, you never fully appreciate them.

To give you an idea of what your Human Resource Advisor at Sea encountered, picture this:

Before you leave, Dan Smith, the NMFS representative, provides training in how to gather data on the trip so it can be used scientifically. After that, you're on your own.

You set sail for a 48 hour trip. You're apprehensive about how well you can take the measurements. The last time you heard the words "latitude and longitude" was in high school geography. You further realize that the last time you stayed up for 24 hours straight was in college 10 (or

so) years ago.

And of course, you don't know if—and where—you'll be sick.

**'NO TURNING BACK'**

There is no turning back. Each crew member carries his own weight. Dan Smith is back in New Jersey and you've got no phone to call him. You can't put this off until later. You can't delegate it to anyone. You can't file it!

As you sway to and fro, you realize that



DAVE NETTLETON

*The author, gathering data. "As you sway to and fro," he says, "you realize that your desk back in Silver Spring isn't such a bad place after all."*

your desk back in Silver Spring isn't such a bad place after all. For instance, it doesn't move (unless someone leans really hard into your cubicle wall).

You really *are* a paper pushing, policy making bureaucrat who has become lulled by familiar and comforting work acronyms like FEFFLA, TSP, and NFC. Why, *everybody* knows what those mean; Federal Employees Family Friendly Leave Act, the Thrift Savings Plan and the National Finance Center (they send us our paychecks, by the way).

These are now replaced by XBT, GMT, Bucket sample, TSG and CPR.

*Yikes.*

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DAVE NETTLETON

*Looking back from the Oleander, towards the Verrazzano Narrows Bridge between Brooklyn and Staten Island, on the first leg of the trip from New Jersey, out into New York harbor to Bermuda.*

## A Personnel Experience: A Desk Jockey Goes to Sea

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Well, the good news is that after awhile these new acronyms become as near and dear to you as those in Human Resources.

### THE 58 STEPS

About a third of the way through your sampling, it becomes painfully obvious that the one thing nobody told you about up front was the 58 steps from the bridge down to the water bucket and the additional 20 steps to the engine room where the TSG spigot is located. Easily over 3,000 steps during this business and life on the ship. Add the wet and wild of several low pressure systems and the whole thing is like a stair master gone carnival. Just for fun, make it 4 a.m. with 12 more hours to go, and the coffee is canned Folgers now becoming concentrated sludge in one of those metal pots on a burner.

Just like the Peace Corps is the toughest job you'll ever love, through



DAVE NETTLETON

*A view from the Oleander to Bermuda, the end of the author's voyage.*

it all you become quite involved with your labor. You're very serious about getting correctly timed and positioned data. The data you write down, put in the computer and send to the satellite; the plankton and water samples you retrieve will be reviewed by NOAA peers. It will be plugged into weather models. It will be analyzed and used and depended on by others.

This data gathering is *cool*.

Additionally, as a crew member on board, you use the NWS Marine Weather Forecast transmitted to the ship every six hours; consult the NOS Nautical Chart to get a visual fix on your position; and run a surreal night time gauntlet of about 10 giant trawlers and their stadium size lights as they fish the Atlantic.

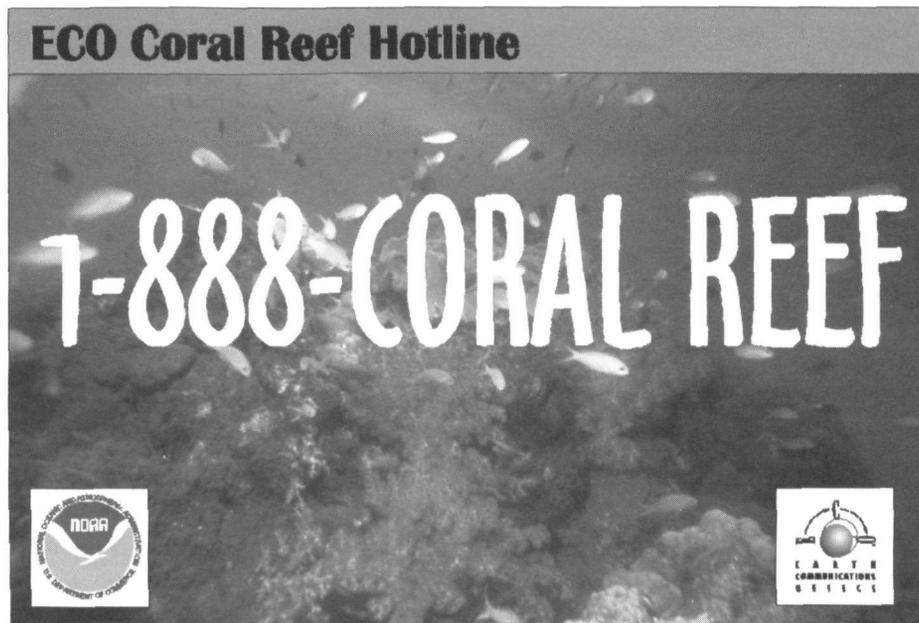
Looking out from the pitch darkness of the bridge, through the 40 feet of windows, surrounded by an array of small lights, you feel like you are boldly going where no Human Resource Advisor has gone before.

It's at this point that you are especially proud to be a NOAA employee, to support those in the field of data gathering and product generation; and it is here where you recommit yourself, as a Human Resource Advisor, to give as accurate information to them as they give to you.



*The command center onboard the Oleander.*

—Dave Nettleton 



The toll-free Coral Reef Hotline was introduced in March with this poster. The hotline is a joint effort between NOAA and ECO—The Earth Communication Office.

## Hotline, Web Site Give Info on Protecting Reefs

Part of NOAA's coral reef public awareness campaign is a toll-free hotline, 1-888-CORAL REEF (see poster, left). The announcer on the hotline, which is sponsored by NOAA and ECO-The Earth Communications Office, is oceanographer Jean-Michel Cousteau.

NOAA is also operating an Internet web site with lots of coral reef information. Point your browser to <http://www.noaa.gov/public-affairs/coral-reef.html>. ☺

## Overfishing Halted to Protect Sharks

Atlantic shark populations are at such historically low levels due to overfishing and threats to their habitat that NMFS is lowering commercial quotas and recreational catch limits to give the species a chance to stabilize.

"After collecting comments from hundreds of fishermen and conservationists, we feel we've developed a rule that will avert further overfishing and stabilize Atlantic shark populations before they dwindle to a point where fishermen and the American public are left without this important resource," said Dr. Rebecca Lent, chief of the fisheries service's Highly Migratory Species Division.

"As predators, sharks are at the top of the marine food chain and play an important role in the ocean's ecosystem. We must maintain, as best we can, the delicate balance between providing business opportunities to the fishing industry and fishing communities, while ensuring this public resource reaches optimum levels," she added. ☺

## Above Average Spring Flooding Possible Throughout Much of Country

*continued from page 2*

ground is already, depth of ground frost, and how quickly or slowly frozen rivers thaw, accumulated snowpacks melt, stream levels, and, most importantly, future precipitation. Under almost any scenario, significant flooding is likely on the Red River of the North and the lower James River."

### Melting Snow a Factor

Substantial snow fell during the winter across north-central and western sections of the United States. As this snow begins to melt, the potential for flooding exists across these areas. Heavy rainfall during February and early March caused devastating flooding in the Ohio Valley and residual flooding continues across portions of the Southeast, the middle and lower Mississippi Valley and the Great Lakes regions. These wet conditions create the possibility of continu-

ing flooding if spring rains are heavy in these areas.

Much of the areas of the country that saw heavy precipitation and significant snowpack buildup during most of the early part of the Water Year (which began Oct. 1, 1996, and ends Sept. 30, 1997) have received subnormal precipitation since the end of January. This aided in the effort to draw down reservoirs to provide water storage capacity in the West. Many reservoirs had filled to very high levels from earlier precipitation and snow melt—conditions that led to devastating flooding along the West Coast over the Christmas-New Year's holidays. Only Southwest desert areas had subnormal precipitation throughout the winter. During February, however, the middle third of the nation saw the passage of several very wet storm systems, and accumulated a widespread area of more than 150 percent of normal precipitation. ☺

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a payload processing facility near Cape Canaveral.

"GOES satellites are a mainstay of weather forecasting in the United States," said Gary Davis, NOAA's director of satellite operations. "They are the backbone of short-term forecasting or nowcasting. With GOES-K, we are ensuring continuity of GOES data."

The real-time weather data gathered by GOES satellites, combined with data from Doppler radars and Automated Surface Observing Systems, greatly aids weather forecasters in providing better warnings of thunderstorms, winter storms, flash floods, hurricanes, and other severe weather. These warnings help to save lives, preserve property, and benefit commercial interests.

## News Briefs

After the satellites are launched by NASA and complete on-orbit checkout, NOAA assumes responsibility for command and control, data receipt, and product generation and distribution. The GOES satellites are a critical component of the ongoing National Weather Service modernization program, aiding forecasters in providing more precise and timely forecasts.

**Warm, Wet Winter:** This winter season was the 22<sup>nd</sup> warmest winter on record for the contiguous United States with an average temperature of 34.1 degrees Fahrenheit compared to a normal of 32.3 degrees Fahrenheit, according to preliminary data released by NOAA's National Climatic Data Center. It was also the wettest winter season on record for the West-North Central region, fourth wettest winter season for the Northwest region, and the 14th wettest winter season for the 48 contiguous states. ☺



Former Congressman Gerry Studds (left) and NOAA's Jeff Benoit (right) at a House exhibit on "Creatures of the Bank."

## Congress Hosts Marine Sanctuary Exhibit; Honors New Stellwagen Sanctuary Name

Former Congressman Gerry Studds (left), and director of NOS's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, Jeff Benoit (right) admire a photo exhibit on display at the U.S. House of Representatives' Cannon Building. The exhibit highlights "Creatures of the

Bank," and officially marks the naming of the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary after Studds, a long-time champion of NOAA's Marine Sanctuary program. ☺

### Got Something to Say? Write Us a Letter

*NOAA Report* will begin a Letters column in the near future, and we're waiting to hear from you. You can send your letters by e-mail, fax, or plain old U.S. Mail to the addresses in the box on the right side of this page. No matter how you send it, we'd like to hear from you. Deadline for each issue is the 15th of the previous month. We can't print them all, but we'll read all of them. ☺

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