

## LANDSAT Addition Makes NOAA Nation's Civilian Satellite Agency

by David S. Johnson

The 1980's will be an exciting period for personnel of NOAA as it assumes new areas of responsibility as the Nation's operational remote sensing satellite agency.

Early in the decade NOAA will begin the design of an operational land remote sensing satellite system that will evolve from the current NASA LANDSAT research and development program. As with the present NOAA operational satellites — the GOES and the TIROS-N series — NOAA functions will include operating the spacecraft, recovery and pre-processing of the data, and assuring that the data will be available to a wide variety of users throughout the world. NOAA, additionally, will be working with NASA to improve the continuity of operationally useful data from the LANDSAT satellites during an interim operational period.

The operational enhancement of the present R&D system and the design of the new system will require NOAA to work with various private and governmental user groups to see how benefits to them from the use of land remote sensing data can be maximized and to involve them in specifying the objectives to be met by the new system. NASA will work closely with NOAA in providing the needed space technology and in designing the required operational satellite and associated ground systems.

If current proposals are accepted, NOAA, through the Department of Commerce, also will become heavily involved during the early 80's in the development and ultimate operation of a new series of satellites designed to collect oceanographic information. Last November when President Carter designated NOAA as the agency to manage all operational civilian

remote sensing activities from space, he also indicated that if it were decided to develop operational ocean satellites, a joint management of the program by NOAA, the Department of Defense, and NASA would be pursued.

Already a small task force of NOAA, NASA and DOD personnel has spent considerable time in preparing preliminary plans for a national oceanic satellite system. The plans being developed by this tri-agency group will be the cornerstone of any future ocean satellite program that may be approved.

The President also directed that separate operational weather satellite programs for the military and civil sectors be continued under Defense and NOAA because of their differing needs. Procurement of polar orbiting meteorological spacecraft of the current design will continue until development of a new system design is fully justified; future satellite design and development will be jointly undertaken by NOAA, NASA and Defense to maximize technology sharing and to minimize cost.

The fourth spacecraft in the GOES series, GOES-D, is scheduled for launch in the last half of 1980. It is possible that the third satellite in the TIROS-N series, NOAA-B, also will be launched this year. Present planning calls for at least two additional GOES spacecraft to be launched before the middle of the decade, and at least five more NOAA polar orbiting satellites by 1984.

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