NOAA REPORT

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August 19, 1987

COMING UP

Advisory Working Group for the WMO Commission/ Climatology in Geneva, Switzerland, Aug. 17- 21.

Canada/U.S. Mapping and Charting Subcommittee meeting in Quebec, Aug. 18-20.

Geosynchronous Platform Planning Meeting in Vancouver, BC, Aug. 18-20.

NOAA Science Seminar Series: "Climate Change and Global Sea Level:" Dr. David Aubrey, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, WSC-5, Room 926, 10:00 a.m., Aug. 25. (Note unusual time and weekday.)

NOAA Mobilizes For Dolphin Strandings:--As bottlenose dolphins continued to wash up on beaches from Virginia to New Jersey early this week, NOAA units moved to investigate the problem. The Marine Fishery Service and Marine Mammal Commission are monitoring the strandings and investigating the cause of death through tissue sample analysis. NOAA's General Counsel drafted and sent a letter of authorization to the dolphin investigating team leader, Dr. Joseph R. Geraci, a marine pathologist and veterinarian from the University of Guelph in Ontario, permitting him to collect beached dolphins and up to 25 dolphins from offshore waters to try to determine the cause of the strandings. This letter was an unprecedented action, authorized under the Marine Mammal Protection Act and done in consultation with NMFS and the Marine Mammal Commission. In the meantime, NOAA Public Affairs personnel are staffing a media center which opened August 9 at Virginia Beach, where necropsies of the dolphins are under way. Daily briefings are being conducted; press, radio, and television coverage continues to be heavy and nationwide. Dr. Geraci will announce preliminary finding on the dolphin deaths at a news conference in Norfolk August 19.

Giant Step for Fish Oil Health Research:--NOAA Northwest and Alaska Fisheries Center in Seattle has developed an inexpensive system for refining highly purified Omega-3 fatty acids in fish oils, previously manufactured at extremely high cost. This development clears the way for a greatly expanded national program of research into the value of eating fish to human health.

Fatty acids in the human diet are widely believed to reduce rates of cardiovascular disease, arthritis and other inflammatory ailments, as well as certain neurological and metabolic disorders.

Using products made possible in quantity by the work of John Spinelli, the Center's Utilization Research Division director, the National Institutes of Health will coordinate a national program of research to investigate this theory.

The manufacture of Omega-3 compounds previously cost up to $2,000 per gram; the NOAA method ultimately may bring the cost down to $5 a gram or less, Spinelli said.

Heart of the system is a 6-foot stainless steel column in which "supercritical" carbon dioxide is introduced to fish oils containing the desired fatty acids. By varying the temperatures -- up to 250 degrees Fahrenheit -- and the pressure -- up to 2500 PSI -- inside the column, scientists can dissolve and isolate the components of fish oils, including eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), the two believed most beneficial to human health.

The system, which presently can produce 70 grams per day of over 90 percent-pure EPA, and 40 grams of DHA, will be installed in NMFS's Charleston, S.C., laboratory, while research continues in Seattle on a larger unit, designed to produce up to 4.5 kilograms (10 pounds) per day.

Colorado "Tornado Alley" Defined:--Dr. James M Wilczak of NOAA's Wave Propagation Laboratory in Boulder, Colo., has identified what he believes to be Colorado's "tornado alley," a 15 to 20-mile-wide strip east of Denver running from Castle Rock north northeasterly to about Bennett.

During a four-week period late in June to mid-July, while a meteorological field research program had northeastern Colorado weather conditions under close scrutiny, six or seven tornadoes occurred in the research area. Every one of them, according to Dr. Wilczak, occurred in the Castle Rock to Bennett strip.

Many of these tornadoes are being spawned, he said, by the Denver Cyclone, a weather phenomenon that forms when surface winds flowing over an east-west oriented ridge near Castle Rock

are curved back onto themselves in a counterclockwise pattern. When the winds collide they are forced up into the atmosphere; thunderstorms - some producing tornadoes - frequently form along the line of wind convergence.

Wilczak hopes to develop computer models which forecasters at the Weather Service office in Denver could use to predict the Denver Cyclone and its accompanying weather.

Fisheries Lab To Stay In Sandy Hook:--The State of New Jersey will build a joint-use laboratory at Sandy Hook to replace NOAA's Fisheries Service laboratory which burned in September 1985.

In addition to NMFS, the facility would be used by the 28 schools of the New Jersey Marine Consortium, Rutgers University's Institute of Marine, Coastal and Estuarine Sciences, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and others.

Total cost would be approximately $11.2 million, of which $7.2 million would be attributable to the NOAA portion. NOAA would lease its part of the facility from the state.

The Fisheries Service has operated in Sandy Hook since the 1960s, specializing in the study of mid-Atlantic fishes and their habitats, with emphasis on recreational species. Much of the laboratory's work in recent years has been focused on the New York Bight.

Since the loss of the facility to an arsonist, NOAA scientists and technicians have been functioning in makeshift quarters.

NOAA-USGS To Open Joint Office:--Acting Secretary of Commerce Clarence J. Brown has signed a charter with the Department of the Interior to establish a Joint NOAA-U.S. Geological Survey office for coordination of mapping and research activities in the Exclusive Economic Zone. The charter provides for coordination between DOC and DOI to avoid duplication of activities, assure adequate response to user needs, and provide timely delivery of products and services and exchange of data.

Amateur Radio Sited At NWS Office:--An amateur radio base station recently was installed at the National Weather Service Office in Buffalo, N.Y., to help spread warnings of dangerous weather. According to Don Wuerch, who heads the Buffalo Weather Service, the new, state-of-the-art radio system is being operated by volunteers whenever severe thunderstorms or tornadoes threaten. Due mostly to the efforts of amateurs in the Buffalo area, the new radio equipment was donated by the Buffalo Chamber of Commerce as a community service.

ERL's Henry Diaz Honored:--At their July meeting, the Fellows of the Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) in Boulder, Colo., voted to make Henry Diaz, of the Air Resources Laboratory's Climate Research Division, a Fellow of the Institute in recognition of his achievements for the ERL/CIRES Climate Program. CIRES is jointly sponsored by NOAA and the University of Colorado.

NOAA Corps Director's Ribbons:--Based on recommendations by the NOAA Corps' Captains Review Board, Director's Ribbons for sustained exemplary performance recently went to Captains J. Austin Yeager, R. Lawrence Swanson, Sigmund R. Petersen, Freddie L. Jeffries, Christian Andreasen, and Donald E. Northrup. Others honored with the Director's Ribbon were Lt. E. Scott Varney for his performance as a member of the NOAA Corps Uniform Board and Lt. Robert W. Maxson for his performance as Chief of the NOS Aeronautical Chart Branch Flight Program.

NOAA Aids Missile Motor Manufacturer:--Morton Thiokol, the missile motor manufacturer, came to NOAA's National Climatic Data Center for help when it detected unacceptable levels of corrosion on the launch shoes of motors shipped to certain locations. Launch shoes follow rails during the initial lift-off phase of a missile launch. The Asheville, N.C., facility provided information on specific weather conditions experienced in the sites where shoe corrosion was detected to aid in Morton Thiokol's investigation.

Joint NOAA/FAA Doppler Radar Experiment:--Members of the Doppler Radar Project at NOAA's National Severe Storms Laboratory are participating in the FAA's Terminal Doppler Weather Radar Experiment in Denver, Colo, which began June 1 and will run through the end of August. This measurement program will develop and validate techniques for the automatic detection of hazardous weather phenomena such as microbursts and gust fronts, turbulence, and heavy rain. Working with the FAA are Dusan Zrnic, Michael Eilts, Steve Smith, Arthur Witt, and Steve Vasiloff.

New Payday For NOAA Corps:--Beginning with the September end-of-month pay period, NOAA Corps officers (along with all other active duty military personnel) will be paid on the first day of the following month, rather than the last day of the pay period month. The change is mandated by Congress. Mid-month payments will not be affected, and paydays still may be advanced up to three days when the first of the month falls on a weekend or holiday, except for the month of September. The new schedule of paydays also will affect the delivery dates of allotment checks, causing some arrival dates to be a day or two later than under the current system.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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