

NOAA Report



July 23, 1990

COMING UP

Alaska Wind Profiler meeting in Silver Spring, Md.,
July 26.

Equatorial Pacific Ocean Climate Studies (EPOCS)
Advisory Committee Proposal Review Meeting in Seattle,
Wash., Aug. 7-9.

Seabed Mining Agreement Signed with Japan:--NOAA has signed an agreement with the Metal Agency of Japan to assess jointly the environmental effects of seabed mining. This will allow NOAA to obtain direct measurements of the impact of mining during an 1993-94 Japanese at-sea test of a fully-integrated mining system. The arrangement is being carried out under the U.S.-Japan Cooperative Program in Natural Resources.

Red Tide Kills Salmon in Puget Sound:--A toxic red tide hit Puget Sound in late June and early July, killing large numbers of salmon in farms in western Puget Sound, as well as a group of 750 chinook salmon averaging six pounds each. This stock, from the White River in the southern sound, was part of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) intensive captive brood-stock program.

Because of the extensive loss--one-half of the remaining gene pool--and because the stock is extinct in its native habitat, the chinook salmon is a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

Three farms near the NMFS research station at Manchester sustained inventory losses estimated at \$5 million. Many experimental fish in net-pens also died. This is the first time since the Manchester station was established in 1969 that a toxic phytoplankton kill was observed. The killer bloom, *heterosigma akashiwo*, is a naked dinoflagellate.

'89-'90 Winter Leaves Great Lakes Cold:--The winter of 1989-1990 was one of the most unusual in decades for the Great Lakes region, with the largest temperature difference from one month to another in 93 years, according to NOAA's Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory in Ann Arbor, Mich.

December 1989 had an average temperature of 13 degrees Fahrenheit, the lowest December temperature since 1897, while

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January 1990 had the third highest January temperature in 93 years, 28 degrees F. The difference, or temperature reversal, was a record-breaking 15 degrees F.

The large reversal was accompanied by much above-normal snowfall in December and much below-normal snowfall in January. Also, the usual lake-effect snowfall in the southern Great Lakes during January never occurred.

The reversal also turned on its head the normal seasonal decline of lake levels in Lake Erie during February, as mild temperatures continued and record precipitation, mostly rain, fell on the Lake Erie basin.

The record December cold wreaked havoc with shippers, producing above-normal ice cover on the lakes and a premature end to the navigation season. But the mild January temperatures reduced the ice cover on Lakes Erie, Michigan and Ontario. Hopes for an early ice breakup were dashed when a late February cold spell in late February brought near normal maximum ice covers in early March. But record high temperatures in March caused rapid snow melting, bringing floods to the southern Great Lakes, ending a very strange season.

Tumorous Turtles Found Off Hawaii:--An epidemic of disabling, life-threatening tumors has been found in the endangered Hawaiian green sea turtles off the island of Molokai, according to the NMFS's Southwest Fisheries Center Laboratory in Honolulu. No cases of the disease had been reported prior to October 1985.

The disease, *fibropapilloma*, causes unsightly tumors and leads to the death of its victims. The tumors, which can reach 12 inches in diameter, break out on a number of locations on turtles, but are especially common on their mouths, throats and nasal passages, hindering breathing and making eating difficult or impossible; on their eyes, severely impairing vision and increasing their vulnerability to predators; and on their jaws, necks, tails and flipper, impairing movement and the ability to swim.

The disease was diagnosed in more than one-third of the green turtles captured and examined at Palaau, a shallow reef off Molokai, during a survey on July 2 and 3. The disease is increasing across the state.

Scientists do not know what causes the disease, how it is spread, nor what its impact will be on the recovery of the Hawaiian green turtle, which is considered threatened in Hawaii and endangered worldwide. The disease has also reached epidemic proportions among turtles in Florida, but is believed to be exceedingly rare elsewhere.

National Geophysical Data Center Celebrates with Seminar, Open House:--The National Geophysical Data Center, part of NOAA's National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service (NESDIS), turns 25 years old next month, and is holding a day-long scientific seminar and public open house to celebrate.

The Boulder, Colo.-based center is responsible for gathering, analyzing and disseminating geophysical data from around the world. The center's computerized archives hold solid earth and marine geophysical data as well as scientific information on the sun and the space environment. More than 10,000 requests for data come to the 100-person staff annually from private industry, academia and government researchers, among others.

The day-long seminar on Thursday, Aug. 9, will include presentations by scientists from NOAA, the University of Colorado and the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, and a speech by Colorado Sen. Timothy Wirth.

Guided tours of the facility and demonstrations on how the massive amounts of information in the center can be used for various purposes, such as studying global climate change, will highlight the public open house on Friday afternoon, Aug. 10.

Japanese and Soviets Join Fisheries Enforcement Group:--Japanese and Soviet delegations joined the U.S.-Canada Working Group for the Exchange of Enforcement Information for the first time at the group's meeting last month in Elicott City, Md. The delegates discussed joint enforcement of fisheries agreements, exchanges of enforcement agents, and other projects aimed at fostering enforcement cooperation.

Sea Grant Fellow Off to Siberia:--Matt Huston, a Sea Grant Fellow working in the Office of Climate and Atmospheric Research, will participate in a joint U.S.-Canada-U.S.S.R. geologic expedition to Siberia, hosted by the Soviet Academy of Sciences. The expedition will examine the geologic record for evidence of past climates and climate changes in the 10,000- to 1 million-year old sediments in northeastern Siberia. Huston is NOAA's representative to the Committee on Earth and Environmental Sciences Interagency Task Group on Earth Systems History. He is also one of 16 recipients this year of a Dean John A. Knauss Marine Policy Fellowship, sponsored by NOAA's Sea Grant College Program.

New NESDIS Customer Service:--A Research Customer Servicing Group has been established at NOAA's National Climatic Data Center to better service the needs of the global climate change research community. This new group will provide researchers with a single contact, and can consult on data set availability, data set limitations, and their applicability to research projects.

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