

NOAA Report



June 11, 1990

COMING UP

Joint Meeting of the National Research Council Committees for NWS Modernization and Meteorological Analysis/Prediction Research in Washington, D.C., June 12-13.

American Meteorological Society 20th Conference on Broadcast Meteorology in Boulder, Colo., June 20-24.

NOAA Awards Luncheon at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington, Va., June 22.

Biennial Canada/United States Hydrological Operation Multipurpose System Steering Committee meeting in Ottawa, Canada, June 25-26.

NOAA At The Summit:--Three NOAA meteorologists found themselves in the midst of a history-making event on May 31 after receiving an unexpected invitation to the White House arrival ceremony for Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and his entourage. Spectators from the Washington, D.C., NWS Forecast Office were Meteorologist-in-Charge Jim Belville and forecasters Jim Weismueller and Brian Smith. The invitation was extended as a result of weather support provided for the occasion by forecast office personnel, which they provide routinely for many high-level government activities - such as White House outdoor ceremonies, presidential inaugurations, and parades - in the Washington area. Although Weather Service personnel occasionally receive invitations to high-level ceremonies, they are seldom able to attend without creating staffing shortages. However, an exception was made for the Gorbachev event. The NWS forecast for the event - warm and sunny, with highs in the 70s and no precipitation - was right on the money.

NOAA Officers On Historic Training Cruise:--Four NOAA Corps officers recently flew to the U.S.S.R. to join the Soviet square-rigged merchant training ship Druzhba for a first ever 3-month cruise for 41 U.S. and 60 Soviet maritime cadets this summer from the Black Sea port of Odessa to the U.S. east coast.

Lt. Joanne F. Flanders, Lt. Craig N. McLean, Lt. David A. Cole, Lt. Timothy B. Wright and three other American instructors,

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including a retired U.S. Coast Guard chief warrant officer, an instructor from Texas A&M University at Galveston, and a professional merchant mariner, will serve as watch officers and instructors alongside the ship's Soviet training officers.

The American cadets are students at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, the California Maritime Academy, the Maine Maritime Academy, the Massachusetts Maritime Academy, Texas A&M University at Galveston Maritime Academy, and the State University of New York Maritime Academy.

The state-of-the-art, 360-foot, 2,300-ton Druzhba, which means "peace," left Odessa June 10 on its 6,500-mile voyage and will arrive in Baltimore, Md., August 4, following port calls in Turkey, North Africa, the Canary Islands, and Bermuda. The ship also will visit New York August 8 for the rededication of Ellis Island and again on August 14-21, followed by port calls in Bourne, Mass., August 25-30, and Castine, Maine, Sept. 2-6.

U.S., Mexican Scientists To Study Monsoon:--NOAA scientists next month will study summer monsoons over the southwestern U.S. and northwestern Mexico, which contribute to severe weather as far east as the Great Lakes.

The month-long study, beginning July 8, will seek an understanding of monsoon processes that help determine regional climate, according to Dr. Robert Maddox, Director of NOAA's National Severe Storms Laboratory in Norman, Okla.

A monsoon is a land-sea wind that operates on a seasonal basis, during the summer blowing from the sea to land, and in winter from land to sea. In the summer cycle moist air moves inland and appears to fuel thunderstorm events.

Measurements taken during the study will be compared with upper-air data collected by National Weather Service stations in the Southwest during the past 40 years to determine regional climate variability and relationships to global phenomena such as El Nino events. The analysis will take a year or more.

The Southwestern Monsoon is created when summertime heating over the Great Basin, the Rocky Mountains and Mexico's Sierra Madre mountain range combine to pull a gigantic flow of air from the southwest to the northeast, carrying moisture from the Pacific and the Gulf of California.

Embedded within the circulation are small-scale convective systems, complexes of thunderstorms acting both individually and in concert. Such systems account for much of the severe summer weather in late afternoon and night over the Southwest and Great Plains.

A NOAA research aircraft, operating from Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport, will document the extent and strength of the monsoon circulation and obtain a variety of other meteorological data.

Small weather balloons will be launched throughout the study from 10 northwestern Mexico sites, with the cooperation of the Mexican Weather Service. The resulting data will detail the air-flow associated with the monsoon, and the structure of the small-scale convective systems.

Mexican scientists will work directly with the NOAA program, and a simultaneous observing effort will occur over Mexico to help researchers understand the sensitivity of water supplies to changes in atmospheric flow patterns. The project will be the most substantial collaborative meteorological research effort thus far between the United States and Mexico.

In a companion study of interest to Arizona weather forecasters, the scientists will attempt to document whether a "heat island" affect stemming from Phoenix influences the evolution of storms forming over mountains in the area and is a major reason why most of that city's summertime electrical storms occur at night. In that investigation, a mobile laboratory capable of onsite launching, tracking, and receiving data from weather balloons will be used, launching from sites in and around Phoenix.

Participating with scientists from the National Severe Storms Laboratory will be personnel from the National Weather Service and National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service, and researchers from Arizona State University, the University of Arizona, the Salt River Project, the Mexican Weather Service, the Mexican Centro de Investigacion Cientifica y de Educacion Superior de Ensenada, and the Cooperative Institute for Research in the Environmental Sciences, a joint NOAA-University of Colorado research organization.

Georges Bank Mollusk Harvest Halted:--On May 25, NOAA used its emergency authority under the Magnuson Act to close the U.S. portion of Georges Bank for the harvesting of all mollusks with an exception for landing shucked sea scallops. The emergency closure was necessary because of the levels of paralytic shellfish poisoning (PSP) recently detected in surf clams and blue mussels. PSP is a marine toxin that can result in illness or death when consumed by humans.

NOAA reacted quickly to a report from Massachusetts officials stating that surf clams recently taken from Georges Bank tested in excess of safe PSP levels. The Massachusetts report also documented the hospitalization of two persons who recently consumed contaminated mussels. NOAA will monitor the situation and extend the 90-day closure if necessary.

NOAA To Review Status of Sockeye Salmon:--A formal biological status review of a petition to list the Snake River Basin sockeye salmon as an endangered species will begin immediately, according to Rolland A. Schmitten, NMFS Northwest Regional Director.

Substantial evidence exists regarding the need to consider listing the species, he said, and an internal status review of sockeye salmon had already been initiated by NMFS when a formal petition to list the Snake River sockeye as endangered was received from the Shoshone-Bannock Indian Tribes.

Schmitten said that he is seeking all biological information that would help NMFS determine the status of the fish. He has sent letters requesting information on sockeye stocks to the governors of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, fish and wildlife agencies, Indian tribes, conservation groups, and water resources managers.

Fox Urges Catch-and Release Fishing:--Noting the depleted status of many marine resources, Dr. William W. Fox, Jr., NOAA Assistant Administrator for Marine Fisheries, told Chartmaker 2000, a conference sponsored by the American League of Anglers and Boaters, "The responsibility for maintaining fishery resources fall upon all of us, and the recreational community must adhere diligently to catch-and-release fishing to ensure the continued viability of all stocks."

"There are over 17 million recreational anglers in this country who catch more than 600 million pounds of fish each year," Dr. Fox said. "We estimate that recreational anglers alone add about \$13.5 billion annually to the U.S. economy."

The conference, held in Washington, D.C., centered around the Wallop-Breaux Trust Fund, which assists the fishing and boating communities. Dr. Fox said the Wallop-Breaux Fund provides the "perfect avenue" for promoting increased cooperation between state and Federal agencies as "we attempt to revitalize and better manage our fisheries resources."

Sea Grant Issues Guide To Cleaner Water:--The New York, Connecticut, and New York Sea Grant Programs, partially supported by NOAA, and WCBS News 88 Radio in New York City have published a citizen's guide to cleaner water. Entitled "Earth Guide - 88 Tips for Cleaner Water," the pamphlet encourages the public to play an active role in cleaning up waters and coastlines and to take action to reduce pollution and improve water quality in the three-state area. Fifty-thousand copies of the pamphlet are being distributed by Sea Grant and the radio station.

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