

NOAA Report

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June 25, 1990

COMING UP

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

American Meteorological Society Fourth Conference on Mesoscale Processes in Boulder, Colo., June 25-29.

National Weather Service Warning Coordination Meteorologists Conference in Boulder, Colo., July 9.

World Meteorological Organization International Symposium on Assimilation of Observations in Meteorology and Oceanography in Clermont-Ferrand, France July 9-13.

NOAA Awards Go To Ten Employees:--Under Secretary John A. Knauss presented NOAA Administrator's Awards to ten employees for outstanding services to the nation at ceremonies at the Army Navy Country Club in Arlington, Va., June 22.

NOAA Awards, the agency's most prestigious, include cash prizes up to \$5,000.

This year, the awards go to:

Eileen L. Shea of the NOAA Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research in Washington, D.C., for critical and unique contributions in support of NOAA and National Global Change Research Programs.

David M. Kennedy and John H. Robinson of NOAA's National Ocean Service in Seattle, Wash., for coordination of NOAA scientific support during the response to the Exxon Valdez oil spill.

Angela Q. Mazure of the NOAA Western Administrative Support Center in Seattle, Wash., for significant cost savings and improvements in the worker's compensation program and accomplishments in the hiring of handicapped workers.

Stephen W. Brown of NOAA's National Weather Service in Boise, Idaho, for exemplary performance in the Weather Service Fire Weather Program.

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George W. Cry of NOAA's National Weather Service in Vicksburg, Miss., for providing water resource information which has lessened negative social, economic, and environmental impacts of both floods and droughts in the Mississippi Valley.

Alan A. Rezek of NOAA's National Weather Service in Charleston, W. Va., for demonstrated leadership in implementing an interdisciplinary forecast operation incorporating an interactive computer technology.

Francis P. Richards of NOAA's National Weather Service in Silver Spring, Md., for outstanding long-term commitment to the NOAA Equal Employment Opportunity program in hiring and promoting development of the disadvantaged.

→ Robert H. Stockman of NOAA's Office of the Comptroller in Washington, D.C., for developing a strategic planning process for NOAA and ensuring the process became a functioning reality.

David Cottingham of the NOAA Office of the Chief Scientist in Washington, D.C., for outstanding contributions to NOAA activities in various conservation programs.

Tanker Owners To Pay For Damage Assessments:--NOAA scientists and the state of Texas will spend the next two to three months assessing what environmental damage may have occurred along the Texas coast as a result of the Mega Borg oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico under an unusual agreement signed June 18 with the tanker owner, K/S Megaborg II.

NOAA also will attempt to protect two species of sea turtles from the effects of the spill.

Under the agreement, the first of its kind ever between NOAA and a tanker owner, K/S Megaborg II will provide \$275,000 to NOAA and the Texas Water Commission for a variety of studies aimed at determining whether any environmental damage has resulted from a spill of light crude oil into the Gulf.

The agreement is unusual because no court has ordered the payment and NOAA has not made any legal determination that damage has occurred.

Among the planned studies is one to evaluate the effect of the oil on the near-shore shrimp fishery along the north Texas coast. Last year fishermen landed almost \$382 million worth of shrimp in Gulf Coast ports, many of the shrimp harvested off Texas.

Other studies will examine sea turtles and marine mammals that are in the path of the spilled oil and the oil's effect on north Texas beaches.

In addition, researchers at NOAA's fisheries laboratory at Galveston will relocate a group of loggerhead turtles from areas threatened by the oil and will reschedule the release of some 2,000 laboratory-reared Kemp's ridley turtles so that the one-and-two-year-old hatchlings are not imperiled by residual oil in the Gulf.

NOAA Sues Firms For Pollution Damages:--NOAA has sued eight California firms for long-term pollution of waters off Los Angeles and Long Beach and for injuring marine life in the areas.

The suit, filed June 18 by the Justice Department on behalf of NOAA, the Interior Department, and the State of California, alleges Montrose Chemical Corp., Westinghouse Electric Corp., Stauffer Chemical Corp. and Potlatch Corp., among others, have dumped the pesticide DDT and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) into Los Angeles and Long Beach harbors, onto the Palos Verdes Shelf off Whites Point and at two dump sites in the San Pedro Channel near Santa Catalina Island.

The contamination, which NOAA says dates back to the 1940s, has injured fish, marine mammals and sea birds.

All the firms were informed last January of the Government's intention to sue, and could be required under federal Superfund legislation to pay tens of millions of dollars to restore damage to natural resources and their habitat. Restoration could include removal or treatment of contaminated underwater sediments, restocking of fish or installation of artificial reefs.

June 18 was considered the last day, under a 90-day time extension negotiated with the Government last March, that the eight firms could be sued. Another potentially responsible party, the Los Angeles County Sanitation Districts, signed a similar time extension that gives the Government until next April to decide whether to sue.

NOAA biologists said that both commercial and sports fish off Los Angeles have been found to have high levels of DDT and PCBs. Bottlenose dolphins and California sea lions have the highest body fat concentrations of these two chemicals of any marine animal it has ever studied, NOAA said.

Severe Weather Works Satellite Overtime:--NOAA's GOES-7 satellite has been working overtime during the the outbreak of severe weather over the past two months. As of June 18, the geostationary satellite had taken special five-minute interval images of severe thunderstorms across the nation 25 days in a row, and 51 of 54 days, according to the NOAA satellite Service. In cases of potentially severe weather, NOAA operates GOES-7 to scan the United States every five minutes instead of every 30 minutes. The images assist NOAA weather forecasters in issuing severe weather watches and warnings to the public.

S.C. Governor To Receive Public Service Award--NOAA will present the agency's Public Service Award to South Carolina Governor Carroll A. Campbell, Jr., for exemplary leadership during Hurricane Hugo in September 1989.

The award will be presented at the South Carolina State House in Columbia by Dr. Elbert W. Friday, NOAA's Deputy Assistant Administrator for Weather Services.

Governor Campbell has been cited for minimizing loss of life and property by consistently cooperating with the National Weather Service during his term of office, and for the conduct of hurricane awareness activities. When a hurricane watch was issued for South Carolina, he encouraged voluntary coastal evacuation. He interrupted normal TV programming to make a live appearance emphasizing Hugo's potential seriousness. When the NWS issued hurricane warnings, the governor ordered mandatory evacuation of the entire South Carolina coast.

Other South Carolina individuals and groups were recognized recently for contributing to the public safety and welfare during Hugo. Awards were presented June 5 at the state hurricane conference in Myrtle Beach. Recipients included Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr.; the State Emergency Preparedness Division; the State Climatology Office and Southeast Regional Climate Center; Dennis Clark, Director of Charleston County Emergency Preparedness; and the Data Processing Department of the State Law Enforcement Division.

Aviation Weather Service Plan In Works--A national plan for cooperative weather service to aviation is being prepared by six aviation-related federal agencies and should be ready by next March, according to Robert L. Carnahan, Federal Coordinator for Meteorology, whose interagency office is part of NOAA.

Significant developments in automated weather observing and forecasting technology have created "new opportunities for substantially improving services to the nation," Carnahan said.

"With the deployment of new meteorological systems now taking place, the timing is right to take a new look at users' needs for more advanced aviation weather services to maintain aviation safety and enhance airspace system capacity," said Edwin Harris, Executive Director for Systems Operation of the FAA which requested the plan.

The six agencies on the National Aviation Weather Program Council are the NOAA Weather Service, the FAA, NASA, the Department of Defense, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Transportation Safety Board.

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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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