



September 17, 1990

## COMING UP

Sea Grant Site Visit Review in Seattle, Wash., Sept. 16-21; in Durham, N.H., Sept. 24-27; in Charlottesville, Va., Sept. 25-27.

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World Meteorological Organization Commission for Basic Systems in London, England, Sept. 25-26.

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Large Marine Ecosystem Concept International Conference in Monaco, Oct. 1-6.

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Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee Meeting in Portland, Me., Oct. 11-12.

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**Data Center Aids British Navy in Gulf Crisis:**--NOAA's National Geophysical Data Center (NGDC) responded to an urgent request from the British Naval Hydrographic Office for detailed information on the Persian Gulf earlier this month. NGDC's computerized database system quickly located the relevant information in the NOAA data center for the Persian Gulf and sent 135,000 track miles of bathymetry data from 59 ship surveys of the Gulf overnight to England. As previously reported, NOAA's Charting and Geodetic Services printed the maps and charts needed by U.S. defense forces in the Persian Gulf during August. The Defense Mapping Agency (DMA) used the presses for an additional daily shift and an extra full day a week to print the large requirement of crisis maps on an emergency basis. (See *NOAA Report*, August 10, 1990, pg. 1).

**Court Rules Marine Sanctuary Regulations May Apply to Foreigners:**--A U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, in Miami, has ruled preliminarily in favor of NOAA in a jurisdictional case that regulations on use of marine sanctuaries outside of the international three-mile limit apply to foreigners as well as Americans. In the case of *U.S. vs. M/V Elpis*, the defendants claimed before the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida in Miami, that the U.S. government could not seize their ship after it was grounded on a reef in the Key Largo National Marine Sanctuary, because they were more than three miles from the coast--the internationally accepted limit of national boundaries. The government argued that under customary international law, the U.S. has the authority to protect its seabed

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resources, even against foreigners. NOAA is awaiting a written opinion on this decision, which lays the groundwork for the trial, set for February 1991.

**Red Snapper Hearings Held:**--Thirteen public hearings were held by the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council in the Gulf states to consider proposals to enlarge the dwindling supply of red snapper in the Gulf. Red snapper is now considered seriously overfished, and the adult population is only about three percent of what it should be.

The most controversial aspect of the proposals is a three-month prohibition on shrimp trawling in the Gulf to reduce the incidental catch of young red snapper. This would be followed three years later by a requirement for shrimpers to use finfish excluder devices in their nets to allow such fish to escape. The same principle is used in turtle excluder devices (TEDs), which allow turtles to escape from shrimpers' nets. Additionally, the directed snapper fishery would be almost completely eliminated until the early 2000s.

The New Orleans hearing attracted the most public and media notice, with 2,000 people attending, many wearing black armbands and ribbons. At least one coastal community called the afternoon of the hearing a period of mourning, closing stores and businesses and hanging black wreaths in windows. Numerous interests joined in criticizing the Gulf Council and NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for the proposals, which they claimed would have dire economic and social effects on Louisiana.

**\$66 Million Pollution Suit Settled:**--NOAA and the Environmental Protection Agency announced that AVX Corporation will pay the government \$66 million in settlement of a suit accusing it of polluting the harbor of New Bedford, Mass. with PCBs.

**Momentous Maps:**--The Davidson Seamount bathymetric map printed last week was the first NOAA has produced using a digital screening-laser engraving process, the state of the art of map making. It was also a commemorative map, celebrating the centennial of the United States Board on Geographic Names, a government agency approves new geographic names and name changes. The map has been on display at the Board's Centennial Symposium.

**Sweep Softly, and Carry a Big Broom:**--The NOAA-funded North Carolina Sea Grant Program is coordinating Big Sweep, a statewide waterway litter cleanup to be held September 22. Last year, more than 3,600 volunteers in Big Sweep '89, the nation's first statewide waterway cleanup, cleared 81.5 tons of debris out of North Carolina rivers, lakes and streams, winning it a national Take Pride in America Award. The award will be presented to representatives of the North Carolina Sea Grant Program at a White House ceremony to be scheduled.

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