

February 25, 1991

## California Drought 'Grim'

## Little Spring Flooding Expected, Hydro Report Says

Below average snow cover and above average winter temperatures should combine to keep spring flooding to a minimum in most of the country, although the potential for floods in a large part of the Midwest from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico is above average, according to a NOAA report issued earlier this month.

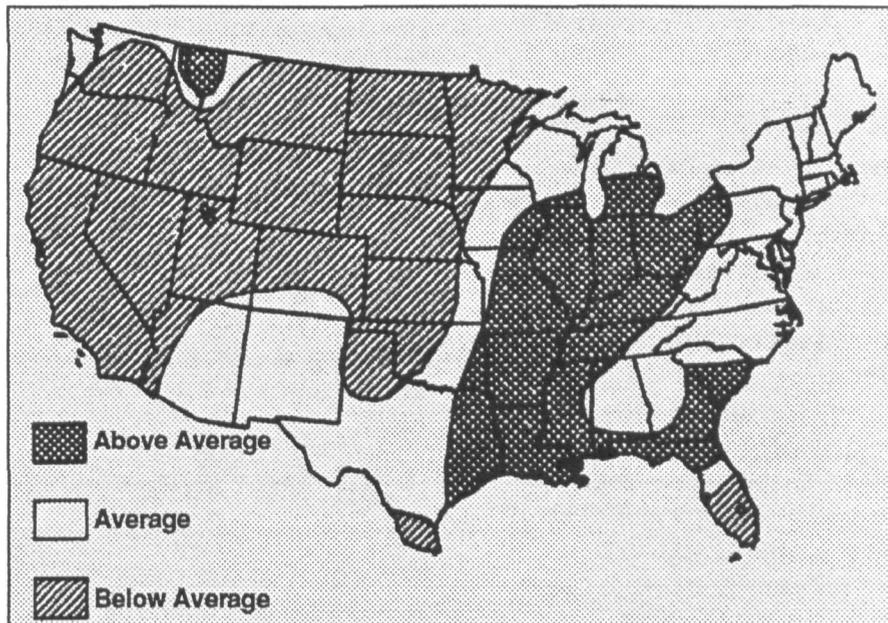
The report, *National Hydrologic Outlook: Spring Flood Potential and Water Supply*, cautions that while most of the country should escape large scale flooding this spring, a large area in the eastern half of the country is experiencing high stream levels and moist soil, creating an above average potential for flooding.

### **Record Warmth Means Rain**

The record warm temperatures in many regions has assured that precipitation that fell has fallen as rain, not snow. This lack of snow cover reduced flood potential, the report stated, since snow melt from warm spring temperatures is a major flood producer. Only a limited part of northwestern Montana may see flooding from melting snow this season.

High stream levels in the central and southeastern U.S. may bring flooding to these areas, the report noted. Many

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Little Likelihood of Flooding: Map shows flooding potential in most of nation is average or lower.

## **Earle Named to Divers Hall of Fame**

NOAA's Chief Scientist, Dr. Sylvia Earle, was inducted into a Hall of Fame for divers earlier this month.

Dr. Earle, who was the first person to walk untethered on the ocean floor at 1,250 feet, was honored by the Diving Equipment Manufacturers Association (DEMA) for her contributions to the world of diving, which have enabled divers to become more familiar with the current trends in diving and deep ocean bed studies.

Author of over 70 publications, Dr. Earle has participated in numerous television productions and has delivered scientific, technical and general interest lectures in more than 50 countries. She has also led more than 50 expeditions, involving more than 5,000 hours underwater.

### **Coming Events**

- **NOAA Briefing for Soviet Delegation**, includes presentations from Great Lakes Research Lab, Oceanic Research Programs, and Office of Hydrology, in Washington, Feb. 27.
- **Coastal States Managers meeting**, to discuss the reauthorization of the Coastal zone Management Act, in Washington, March 4-6.

## Effects on Stellers Questioned

# NMFS Closes Alaska Pollock Fishery Over Sea Lions

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) has temporarily closed the Alaskan pollock fishery until a final 1991 total allowable catch (TAC) limit is agreed upon and implemented.

A proposed 1991 TAC of 133,400 metric tons, an 80 percent increase over current limits, has been contested by the Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund. The Fund claims that the Department of Commerce, through NMFS, failed to ade-

quately study the effect of such a TAC increase on Steller sea lions, which rely on the pollock for much of their diet. Steller sea lions are listed as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act.

Increased protection for Steller sea lion colonies, including 10-mile "no fishing" zones, is being studied by NMFS's Alaska Region.

Before its closing on February 15, the fishery's TAC was 70,000 metric tons, with quarterly limits of 17,500 metric tons. Current limits allow for no direct fishing of pollock.

## Jeffries Takes Helm at Atlantic Marine Center

Rear Admiral Freddie L. Jeffries will be sworn in as Director of NOAA's Atlantic Marine Center in Norfolk, Va., in a change of command ceremony later this week.

Jeffries, who is currently deputy director of the Office of NOAA Corps Operations, relieves Rear Admiral Ray E. Moses, who is retiring.

The Atlantic Marine Center operates NOAA's east coast fleet of research and survey ships.

From 1988 to 1990, Jeffries was executive director of NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research. Prior to that, he served as commanding officer of the NOAA Ship *Oceanographer*, one of the two largest ships in the NOAA Fleet.

## Joint Ice Center Finds New World Records

Ice edges reached new minimums and maximums around the world in the week ending Feb. 16, the NOAA-Navy Joint Ice Center in Suitland, Md., reported last week.

Ice reached 60 miles farther south into the north Atlantic Ocean, a new maximum ice extent that eclipsed a record set in April of last year.

Meanwhile, north of Japan in the Sea of Okhotsk, a minimum ice extent record was set—3,000 square miles less ice than the record set in February 1976.

The trend of simultaneous maximum and minimum sea ice edges was first observed by the NOAA-Navy Joint Ice Center early last year. Using a Digital Ice Forecasting and Analysis System (DIFAS), NOAA satellite images were enhanced to reveal that throughout the 1990 season, a new maximum ice extent occurred in upper Canada and new minimum edge records were set in the East Siberian Sea.

### **Western Water Supply Problems 'All But Certain': NOAA Study**

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parts of these regions have seen repeated flooding in the last several months, which has saturated the ground, setting the stage for more flooding if significant rainfall occurs.

Water supply problems are "all but certain" for much of California, Nevada and Utah, with likely problems also in south central Idaho, north-eastern Montana and most of North Dakota, the report added. Heavy snow cover in portions of Arizona and New Mexico should be "especially welcome," since much of this

area has been suffering from extremely dry conditions.

#### **'Grim' Snowpack in Calif.**

The record-breaking drought in California is approaching its fifth year now, the study said, with far below average precipitation last year, and only one-quarter of normal levels since October 1990. It also characterized mountain snow pack levels, an important source of water for California, as "grim"—about 20 percent of normal.

The report was prepared by the NOAA National Weather Service's Office of Hydrology in Silver Spring, Md.

# **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

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