

NOAA REPORT



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NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service has taken the California gray whale (above) off the Endangered Species list, saying the species has "fully recovered."

Virginia Beach Water Use: The City of Virginia Beach, Va., may proceed to seek federal permits necessary for withdrawal of 60 million gallons of water daily from Lake Gaston, N.C., Secretary of Commerce Barbara H. Franklin ruled last month. North Carolina cited federal coastal zone management law in arguing that the water drawdowns would be harmful to fish, particularly striped bass, in Albermarle Sound. NOAA administers and enforces the coastal zone laws. The secretary based her decision on the Justice Department's opinion that one state could not object to a project exclusively within another state.

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Cuban Refugee Vessel Runs Aground in Florida Keys: A 70-foot Cuban supply vessel, the *Lambda Acero*, carrying 23 refugees, went aground off Key West, Fl., last month, in an area known as the Eastern Dry Docks inside NOAA's Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary. The ship's captain told the U.S. Coast Guard there were 633 gallons of diesel fuel aboard and oil spill protection measures were taken immediately. No spill was reported. Because the accident took place in a federal marine sanctuary, a NOAA damage assessment team was dispatched at daybreak to work with the Florida Marine Patrol and the Coast Guard in freeing the vessel. The refugees, who were all removed without incident and taken to the Key West Coast Guard station, have been turned over to a Catholic relief

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But NMFS May Add Maine Harbor Porpoise

Calif. Gray Whale Off Endangered Species List

The California gray whale population has "fully recovered" and will be the first marine mammal removed from the Endangered Species list, according to a NMFS announcement.

At the same time, though, NMFS is proposing to designate the Gulf of Maine harbor porpoise as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act.

Whale Stock Grew Three Percent a Year

A 1991 NMFS review of the California gray whale determined the stock size has been increasing in recent years at a rate of over three percent a year to the current figure of over 21,000 mammals. The figure is higher now than the estimated pre-whaling population of 15,000 to 20,000 in 1846. Much of the recovery success is due to protection the

Mexican government provided to the whales' calving and winter habitat in Baja California.

Although the gray whale is no longer considered in danger of extinction, it will remain subject to prohibitions against harm under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Status to Be Monitored for Five Years

In addition, NMFS will monitor the status of the species for at least five years. If, at any time during the monitoring period, the gray whale is threatened, emergency protective regulations will be issued.

Each winter the California gray whale migrates down from the Bering Sea along the North American coast to the west coast of Baja California and their winter calving grounds.

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'Linchpin of Modernization' Readied**NWS Awards \$41M AWIPS Contract**

NOAA's National Weather Service has awarded a contract to develop the Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System, known as AWIPS, which will rapidly analyze weather data and distribute the results nationwide.

The \$41-million, 39-month contract was awarded to PRC, Inc. of McLean, Va.

"AWIPS is the linchpin of the National Weather Service's 10-year modernization program," said Joe Friday, NOAA's assistant administrator for weather services. "By pooling a veritable ocean of data from our new Doppler radars, satellites and surface observing systems, it will enable forecasters to provide faster, more accurate weather advisories for transportation, agriculture, manufacturing and communities across the nation."

Upgrade a 'Quantum Leap'

NOAA's planned upgrade of weather satellites, improved weather radars and hundreds of ground-based sensors will mean a quantum leap in weather observation data available to

weather service forecasters and hydrologists. AWIPS allows access to these multiple sources of data through a single workstation, permitting local and area forecasters to manipulate incoming data quickly in "pictographic" form and interact with other such stations in the state and national network.

equipped with 6 to 10 workstations linked by a high speed communications network. The first office will be outfitted by 1995.

Forecasters working with AWIPS daily will have routine access to over 200 satellite "snapshot" images from the new GOES satellite 22,000 miles above the equator to analyze clouds, temperature and moisture in areas as small as a few square miles. They will have daily access to as many as 8,000

'Access to this great new flow of weather information will minimize the manual part of the forecasters job while giving maximum sway to his or her professional judgement,' said Friday.

AWIPS uses both powerful computer technology and sophisticated software to make these multiple sources of data available at more than 120 modernized forecast offices by 1998. Each forecast office will be

weather radar images needed to track violent weather; and data from up to 1700 automated devices for collecting ground observations of temperature, precipitation, wind speed, direction and visibility.

Professional Judgement Emphasized

"Forecasters can request displays that overlay and animate images and graphics to give them a comprehensive look at weather data, a key to higher accuracy and reliability of warning and forecasts," said Friday. "Access to this great new flow of weather information will minimize the manual part of the forecasters job while giving maximum sway to his or her professional judgement."

Forecasters typically "roller-skated" around the forecast office from radar screen to teletype to clip board, acquiring the information needed to make informed decisions. Forecasting to date has been too time consuming, according to Friday.

Timely and accurate warnings have been hampered by the lack of data and the complex installations needed to define developing severe weather at the area and local level. ☒

Me. Harbor Porpoise May Be Added to Endangered Species List: NMFS

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Harbor Porpoise 'Threatened'

While some protection of the gray whale is being lifted, NMFS is recommending listing the Gulf of Maine harbor porpoise as "threatened," subject to public comment.

After consideration of public reaction to the proposal, NMFS will determine whether final listing is warranted. It will also decide whether pending commercial fishery management measures would reduce porpoise kill to acceptable levels or if further restrictions are required. These

could include closed seasons, area closures or incidental kill limits.

Year-Long Survey

The fisheries service determined after a year-long scientific review and data collection that the porpoise could not sustain a healthy population level without serious reduction of incidental kills by commercial fishermen. Existing regulatory programs were inadequate, the agency ruled.

About a dozen environmental and civic organizations petitioned last September that the animal be added to the U.S. List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife. ☒

Record Antarctic Ozone Season Ends

A record-shattering season of ozone depletion over Antarctica has come to an end, according to data from a NOAA monitoring station at the South Pole.

Ozone amounts in the column of air above the NOAA monitoring site reached 260 Dobson units—a measurement of ozone column thickness—on Dec. 6, shooting up from about 185 DUs the previous day. This season saw concentrations

slowly increase from Oct. 12 to Dec. 5, followed by the anticipated sharp increase.

NOAA scientists consider the ozone hole season to begin once concentrations drop below 200 DUs for several days—usually in mid-

September—and to end when the amount exceeds 200 DUs after a steady increase in numbers.

This season's ozone hole:

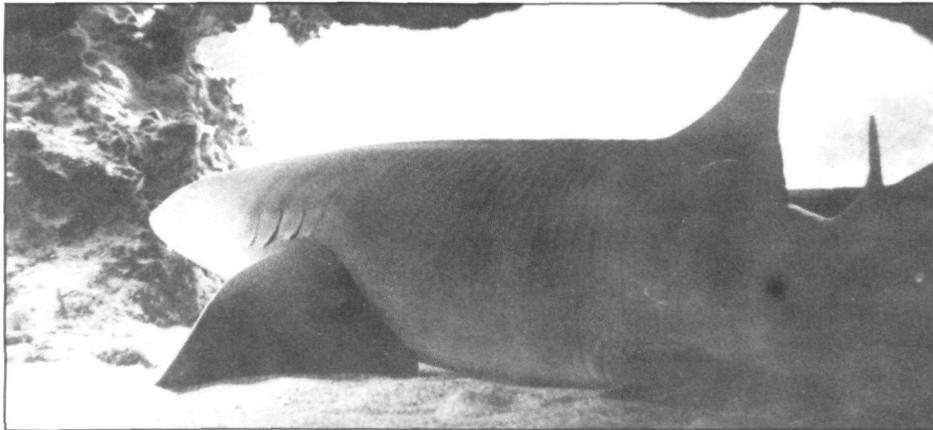
- ❑ began earlier than in any previous year with 168 DUs on Sept. 8;
- ❑ lasted longer (13 weeks) than any previous season;
- ❑ experienced the lowest concentration ever with 105 DUs on Oct. 12; and,
- ❑ had, according to NOAA and NASA satellite observations, the greatest spacial extent (23 million square kilometers) of any ozone hole observed.

Inhabited Land Exposed for First Time

On Oct. 5 and 6 satellite observations analyzed at NOAA's Satellite Research Laboratory showed the hole over the southern tip of South America for the first time ever.

Seasonal deterioration of ozone over Antarctica has been observed since 1985. Ozone over Antarctica is destroyed by chlorine and bromine in the stratosphere possibly stemming from manmade chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) used for such purposes as

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A new NMFS shark management plan will protect smaller sharks, like the nurse shark (above), photographed in NOAA's Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary in Florida.

NMFS Shark Management Plan to Aid Declining Populations in Atlantic, Gulf

A new NMFS shark management plan should prevent further declines in shark populations, based on conclusions by NMFS that large coastal sharks are overfished, while small coastal and high-seas sharks are fully utilized.

The shark plan includes management measures for 39 of the most frequently caught species, separated into three groups: Large coastal sharks (22 species), small coastal sharks (7 species), and high-seas sharks (10 species). Thirty-four other sharks are also referenced in the plan because they are taken incidentally in shark, swordfish or tuna longline fisheries.

Overfishing, 'Finning' Addressed

The management plan and accompanying environmental impact

statement address problems of overfishing, stock rebuilding, shark finning (harvest for fins alone), by-catch mortality and inadequate data in offshore waters of the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean Sea.

Revised Quotas, Estimates

Changes from the proposed June 1992 plan include revised estimates of long-term stock productivity, annual commercial quotas and bag limits for large coastal and high-seas species groups.

The fisheries service prepared the management plan and impact statement following collection of over 1,100 comments from fishermen, fish buyers, and state fishery management agencies. Comments are summarized in the impact statement. ☒

New SARSAT Station Opens

A new SARSAT ground station that will help save the lives of mariners and pilots in distress was opened last month at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Ca.

The new station will replace NOAA's current ground station near San Francisco. The Vandenberg site, farther south than San Francisco, will help to provide better coverage of the Pacific Ocean, along with stations in Alaska and Hawaii. ☒

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organization in Key West. The grounding caused damage to live corals at the tops of some of the spurs.

New Sea Turtle Conservation Regulations and Shrimp Trawling Requirements: New regulations amending sea turtle conservation requirements applicable to shrimp trawlers in the Southeastern Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico went into effect last month. Shrimp trawlers must now comply with sea turtle conservation measures throughout the year in all inshore and offshore waters. Shrimp trawlers over 25 feet long operating in all offshore waters must use turtle excluder devices (TEDs). As of Jan. 1, 1993, shrimp trawlers under 25 feet operating in offshore waters will be prohibited from using limited tow-times

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as an alternative to TEDs. All shrimp trawlers operating in inshore waters must also use TEDs, except those carrying a single net with a headrope length of less than 35 feet and footrope length of less than 44 feet. Full implementation of the requirements, which will require use of TEDs year round in all waters, will be completed by Dec. 1, 1994.

NOAA Joins Partnership to Promote Environmental Conservation: NOAA has signed a partnership agreement with the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States to provide scientific and technical assistance to Latin America and the Caribbean in an effort to improve management of that area's natural resources. NOAA specialists will perform climate impact studies on river basins and coastal ecosystems and help train Latin American and the Caribbean scientists in natural resource management. The agreement calls for a three-year commitment from both parties. ☒

Personnel Adds Two With Know-How

NOAA's present tight fiscal times have created an even greater demand for managers who have been through these trenches before. Two of them, Gloria Harris and Zane Schauer, have recently joined our personnel management team.

Gloria, our new Director of Personnel Programs and Organization Analysis, comes to NOAA from the Office of the Secretary at the Department of Transportation. While at

her proactive "meet and deal" style to provide you with the best service in what can be a tricky field. She will visit managers, supervisors, and employees to identify NOAA's personnel needs and challenges, and will work with them to develop and implement policies to support NOAA missions.

Zane came from the Department of the Navy to be NOAA's Director of Personnel Operations. During his 22 years of government service, he has

ADMIN CORNER

Transportation, Gloria lead a variety of unique and exciting activities in addition to managing the human resource program. For example, she recently planned a historic event to honor Russian President Boris Yeltsin, as well as Transportation's 25th anniversary commemoration. At NOAA, Gloria will continue to use

made customer focus the singular operating principle for the personnel programs that he has managed. He has served as the Personnel Officer for the Naval Academy; as an Army Captain, he was among the first faculty members of the Department of Defense Race Relations Institute. Zane also has the distinction of having served as both an EEO Officer and a Personnel Officer. At NOAA, he will launch a number of customer-focused initiatives including a customer service survey and courtesy calls on senior management officials to develop mutual understandings of mission, needs and constraints. Zane promises the fullest measure of service possible. ☒

Ozone Season Ends

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refrigeration, production of insulation and cleaning of electronic parts.

This season, according to Samuel Oltmans of NOAA's Climate Monitoring and Diagnostics Laboratory in Boulder, Colo., there was much stronger than normal depletion at an altitude between 11 and 20 kilometers (7 to 13 miles), persisting throughout the entire ozone hole season. The level at which this depletion occurred coincides with the altitude at which large concentrations of particles from the Mt. Pinatubo eruption are found, he noted.

Oltmans said that until this year, the years 1987 and 1990 were considered the most severe. In both years the ozone hole developed in mid-September and filled in by the end of November. ☒

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