NOAA REPORT

Vol. XI, No. 7 www.publicaffairs.noaa.gov/nr July 2002

Dane Konop/NOAA

William J. Brennan is the newly appointed deputy assistant secretary of commerce for international affairs.

William J. Brennan Appointed to the NOAA Leadership

—By Dane Konop

William J. Brennan, a man whose experience in ocean matters runs the gamut from merchant seaman to NOAA fisheries scientist to commissioner of marine resources for the state of Maine, is the new deputy assistant secretary of commerce for international affairs.

In a wide-ranging interview June 26 after his first seven days on the job, Brennan talked about his myriad experiences in fisheries and environmental science, his near-term plans and his joy at being back at NOAA.

Brennan likes to explore new

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NOAA-17 Satellite Launched

—By Marilu Trainor & Pat Viets

A new NOAA satellite that will improve weather forecasting and monitor environmental events around the world soared into space aboard a Titan II rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., June 24.

"We're extremely pleased with the success of the launch and look forward to a successful mission for NOAA-17," said NOAA Administrator Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., USN (ret.), who attanded the launch.

"NOAA-17 will enable continuity of data for monitoring events such as El Niño, droughts, volcanic ash, fires and floods. In addition, it will support the international COSPAS-SARSAT system by providing search and rescue capabilities essential for detection and location of ships, aircraft and people in distress," Lautenbacher said.

Like other NOAA satellites, NOAA-17 will collect environmental data and transmit the information to users around the world to enhance weather forecasting. In the United States, the data will be used primarily by NOAA's National Weather Service for its long-range weather and climate forecasts.

"The launch of NOAA-17 will maintain the continuity of polar satellite data and services that started over 40 years ago," said Mike Mignogno, NESDIS' polar satellite program manager.

Mignogno said the satellites are planned for a two-year operational period, but are actually averaging nearly four years.

"The satellite will orbit 450 nautical miles above the Earth giving us a view four times a day," Mignogno said. "NOAA operates two geostationary and two polar-orbiting satellites. In the past, one polar-orbiter crossed the equator at 7:30 a.m. local time and one at 2 p.m. NOAA-17 will replace NOAA-15 as the morning orbiter, but will cross the equator at 10 a.m. This will be the first satellite for NOAA that we have in this mid-morning orbit. Because of the better lightning at 10 o'clock

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Mark Powell/Custom Image Photography

A Titan II rocket carrying the NOAA-17 satellite blasts off from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California June 24.

New Ocean City, Md., Field Office Aids Mid-Atlantic Fisheries Enforcement

—By Sandra Curtin

On a morning in mid-June, a message came in from Maryland's Department of Natural Resources Police that a trawler had pulled into the west Ocean City, Md., dock with a possible "overage," or illegally large take, of flounder.

NOAA Fisheries special agent Steve Niemi headed over to take a look.

As fisherman unloaded the catch, Niemi boarded the boat and scanned the deck. A glance showed that the flounder was within legal limits. But a review of the ship's logbook showed the captain had failed to record his catch of monkfish. This time Niemi issued the captain a warning. The next time he could be fined.

"We want to know where the fish are going," said Niemi. "You need to make sure that the quotas are based on the best current statistics combined with the best current catch data, and that these quotas are being followed. If a guy comes to shore with a boat load of fish and nothing in his logbook, then the fish can just generally disappear. That's what we don't want to see."

Vessel boardings and catch inspections are just a few of the many tasks performed by Niemi at the new field office of NOAA Fisheries' Office for Law Enforcement near Ocean City.

The office was opened recently due to the volume of cases experienced in the mid-Atlantic area.

"The next office to the north is Brielle, N.J., and the one to the south is Newport News, Va. So this office is going to serve the central coast area," said Andy Cohen, deputy special agent in charge for the Office for Law Enforcement's northeast division.

Officer Andy Dunton/Virginia Marine Patrol

NOAA Fisheries special agents Steve Niemi (left) and Logan Gregory inspect a fishing net to ensure it won't inadvertently catch sea turtles.

Special agents board vessels and inspect docks to look for overages of fish and logbook violations. They also conduct in depth investigations into marine mammal harassment, illegal imports of marine goods and reports of fishing in closed areas or excess days at sea.

"I've got a marine mammal investigation for an Atlantic fisherman who deployed his trawl gear off his boat right in the middle of a pod of dolphins," said Niemi. "During the same day he retrieved a pilot whale and calf in his net. None of these have been reported as incidental takes while fishing."

Special agents work in close coordination with other law enforcement officials. They are given limited powers under the Magnuson-Stevens Act to perform federal boardings to check both fishing catch and the ship's logbooks.

"We can actually work the cases along with the (federal) officer," said Corporal Rodger Bennett of the Maryland Natural Resources Police. Bennett said this cooperative venture puts additional eyes and ears out on the docks.

"It's a good deterrent if these fishermen know that when they come to shore there is a good chance that they are going to be boarded either by me or one of the state officers," Niemi said.

Niemi is also part of the local marine mammal stranding network and may be called upon to assist when animals are injured or ill.

If a charter boat operation reportedly gets too close to whales or pushes dolphins into the rocks, he can educate them.

Although the Ocean City office has been open for just a few months, Niemi said he is busy with numerous ongoing investigations and plans.

Despite planning, his schedule is always subject to change at a moment's notice.

"Basically you never know what the day is going to hold," he said.

Lori Sumner/NOAA

James Houston.

James Houston Is the Employee of the Month for July

—By Jeanne Kouhestani

When it comes to demonstrating exceptional initiative and dedication to NOAA, few can equal James Houston, according to those who work with him at the Aircraft Operations Center, part of the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations. Houston, the center's aerospace quality assurance specialist, is NOAA's July Employee of the Month.

It has become the norm since Houston joined the Aircraft Operations Center's team that he is the "go-to" guy for most of the complicated aircraft issues, both those involving NOAA missions as well as those supporting other agencies.

"Jim is the kind of guy who goes out of his way to do anything he can to get a job done," said his supervisor, Cmdr. Phil Kenul, chief of the Aircraft Maintenance Branch. "He's worked for me for three years, and I've found that anything I give him to do, he runs it to ground until he gets an answer."

Kenul had plenty of examples to offer of Houston's innovations on the job.

"Jim recognized that AOC needed to document standardized maintenance operating procedures, so he formalized the maintenance operating instructions and ensured that they are followed or changed as necessary," he said. "His experience with computers has been worth its weight in gold.

He modified an automated budget tracking program so that personnel can track all aspects of the status of their maintenance actions, especially those involving contracts and procurements.

He has developed a Web-based aircraft situation report to make it easy for aircraft crews to report all necessary status items on-line. He is even in the process of installing a server so that the Aircraft Maintenance Branch will have a (local area network) for branch use," Kenul said.

In his duties as aerospace quality assurance specialist, Houston frequently chairs and coordinates the center's configuration control team, where he ensures that the aircraft configuration mode proposed by the user is reviewed for safety, feasibility and regulatory compliance before it's implemented.

Because the Aircraft Operations Center constantly modifies and reconfigures NOAA aircraft to meet specialized mission requirements, Houston saw a need to acquire the latest version of the Defense Department's automated weight and balance system for aircraft.

Houston is presently completing inventories of each aircraft to provide accurate weights and balances. This program will automate and streamline the weight and balance computation procedure, eliminating errors, improving accuracy, but most importantly,

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Dane Konop/NOAA

Rosemarie McKeeby.

July Team Member of the Month Is Rosemarie McKeeby

—By Nicole Franz

Rosemarie McKeeby, a program analyst under contract to the National Policy and Evaluation Division of the National Ocean Service's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, has been named July's Team Member of the Month.

The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management has recently been adding new programs designed to improve its services and balance the use and protection of the nation's coasts and oceans.

McKeeby has worked on many such projects. She is currently working on expanding interagency watershed initiatives, as part of an interagency workgroup. McKeeby joined with 500 other community leaders and team members last summer in an interagency watershed forum and is now working to respond to recommendations from that meeting of minds.

She says these interagency programs give her the chance to

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Focus On...

Linda Belton/NOAA

Deputy Under Secretary Scott Gudes (front, left center) and other NOAA officials introduced NOAA programs and the NOAA mission to the undergraduate scholars class of 2002, part of the Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions.

Dane Konop/NOAA

Maya Nunley, a chemistry major at Clark University, and Winston Luke, a scientist with NOAA's Air Resources Laboratory, check instruments used to collect gases in the atmosphere prior to deploying them in the Chesapeake Bay region to measure ammonia from chicken wastes.

NOAA Hosts Undergraduate Scholars From Minority Serving Institutions

—By Dane Konop

This summer NOAA is hosting eight undergraduate student interns from historically black colleges and minority serving institutions. All are interning in NOAA offices in the Washington, D.C., area.

The undergraduate scholarship program, part of NOAA's educational partnership program with minority serving institutions, places the students throughout the NOAA organization, generally in disciplines directly related to the students' majors.

According to program manager Jacqueline J. Rousseau, "The program is designed to expose students to NOAA and its mission, and (for them) to consider a career with the agency."

Undergraduate scholars selected for the program must have a 3.0 minimum overall grade point average.

The candidates selected annually receive a weekly stipend during their summer internship, plus tuition and fee assistance during the school year.

After a week of orientation and visits to various NOAA facilities in the Washington, D.C., area, students get a chance to work side by side with NOAA scientists and other professionals.

Intern Kristen Gross, an environmental science and toxicology major at Florida A&M University, spent her first week writing one-page summaries of products of the National Ocean Service's National

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Eric Agnew/Texas A&M

After a tour of NOAA's fisheries laboratory in Oxford, Md., the students took a short cruise aboard NOAA's research vessel Laidly to examine oysters growing on an oyster bar midway down the Eastern Shore of Chesapeake Bay.

Dane Konop/NOAA

Nadine Phillpotts, a computer science major from Florida International University writes computer code for a new Weather Service Web page that will present nationwide forecast information that can be customized by the public.

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Centers for Coastal Ocean Science. The budding toxicologist said she found the subject matter to be very interesting. "I just finished forecasting harmful algal blooms and am starting on pollution and coastal development," she said.

Not all the interns will work in office settings.

Brion Dolan, an environmental biology major at Texas A&M, will work with the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations, under the tutelage of Elizabeth White.

Dolan, who was originally attracted to the office by the prospect of flying, spent a day with the other interns on NOAA's *Bay Hydrographer* observing the measurement of water depths in Chesapeake Bay.

"It was nice to get out on the bay, see a little of the area and learn about the hands-on aspects of NOS and hydrography," Dolan said.

"We're also letting him fly a little bit," White said. "We're going to get him out on the Twin Otter for the right whale spotting project. And (we'll) try to get him out on one of the ships—*Albatross*, *Ferrel* maybe," she said.

Dane Konop/NOAA

Donna Wieting (seated), chief of the Marine Mammal Conservation Division of NOAA Fisheries, meets with (left to right) summer worker Gregory Catchings, a pre-med student from Howard University, and interns Angel Washington, a biology major from South Carolina State University, and Alcione Frederick, a biology major at Juniata (Pa.) College. Catchings and Frederick are sponsored by the Oak Ridge (Tenn.) Institute of Science and Education.

"I'm looking forward to learning more about the organization, getting the feel for how the policy and management sides run, how the research side's run," Dolan said.

Would he consider a career with NOAA? "From what I've seen in the past couple of weeks, it's a good possibility," he said.

Satellite Launched

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versus the normal morning satellite time of 7:30, we will be able to generate better imagery-based products than we have in the past," Mignogno said.

"In addition," he said, "we will be able to operate an instrument to monitor atmospheric ozone on this satellite, and again this is because of the higher sun angles that are associated with this particular orbit."

"This is the third in a series of five polar-orbiting satellites, with each satellite offering improved imaging and sounding capabilities. This system will continue to operate over the next ten years," said Greg Withee, NOAA assistant administrator for satellite and information services.

NOAA-17 was built by Lockheed Martin Space Systems Co., Sunnyvale, Calif., and launched for NOAA under technical guidance and project management by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center.

NASA will turn operational control of the NOAA-17 spacecraft over to NOAA three weeks after launch.

NASA's comprehensive on-orbit verification period is expected to last until approximately 45 days after launch.

During a post-launch media opportunity, Lt. Col. Clint Crosier, the Air Force launch director, explained that the rocket used to launch NOAA-17 was "on alert" as an inter-continental ballistic missile at Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark., from 1969 to 1987. Once the missiles were taken off alert status, the Air Force ordered 14 to be modified to carry weather satellites. Eleven Titan II rockets have successfully carried modern-day payloads into orbit.

Michael Simpson, deputy director of the NESDIS Office of Satellite Operations in Suitland, Md, issued a summary from the NASA-NOAA flight operations team stating that the launch had taken place in the first minute of the 10-minute launch window, and that all deployments had occurred.

Seconds after the launch, NOAA controllers in the Satellite Operations Control Center in Suitland and mission controllers on site at Vandenberg began receiving data from the satellite.

Brennan

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subjects from the bottom up, and from the inside out.

Despite being NOAA's point person for international affairs, he does not expect any immediate international travel. Instead, he said, "I see it far more important that I get out and see the regional offices of each of the NOAA (line offices) and get a much better feel for what they do."

He reoriented himself to NOAA in his first week on the job by meeting with each of the assistant administrators.

Most of his education and experience has been ocean-oriented.

Brennan earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in marine biology and marine affairs from the University of Maine and the University of Rhode Island. He also recently received his Ph.D. in ecology and environmental sciences from the University of Maine.

In the 1980s, he served on Capitol Hill on the staff of U.S. Rep. John R. McKernan of Maine, then followed McKernan back to Maine as commissioner of the Department of Marine Resources when McKernan was elected governor.

After leaving state government in 1995, he did consulting work in environmental policy, was a member of the New England Fisheries Management Council and other boards, and in 1999 was appointed the Sawyer Professor at the Corning School of Ocean Studies.

Although he now is a major player in the policies and politics of the oceans and atmosphere, Brennan is at heart a seaman.

"I love going to sea. I love being on ships," he said.

A native of Maine, Brennan grew up with the ocean in his front yard.

Brennan graduated from high school in the late 1960s when the Vietnam War was still in full swing, with thousands of young men his age facing the military draft.

"I was kind of a wayward kid," he said. Although he was virtually draft-proof because he had drawn a high draft lottery number, he nonetheless joined the merchant marine to find some direction in life.

Brennan literally and figuratively started at the bottom.

"My first ship was the *SS Wilmington Getty*, a 'jumboized' T2 tanker. I was what was called a 'wiper,' which was the lowest man on the totem pole. I was down in the bilge most of the time, taking a rag with some sort of solvent and cleaning the crap off the bulkheads," he said.

Brennan also worked on commercial fishing vessels as an able bodied seaman. His experiences at sea aroused his curiosity "about all this stuff we were pulling up from the bottom," he said, and drew him to college to learn more, a pattern that would repeat itself throughout his life.

After graduating from the University of Maine with a bachelor's degree in marine biology, Brennan returned to sea with the merchant marine. A chance encounter between his brother

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Brennan

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and Ken Sherman, then and now the director of NOAA's fisheries laboratory in Narragansett, R.I., brought him to NOAA Fisheries. While shuttling Sherman and his family to a boat they had rented, he mentioned his brother Bill had just gotten his degree and was interested in a job.

"I was at sea at the time. I came back a month later and gave Ken a call, who led me to Wally Smith at the (NOAA) Sandy Hook lab. They needed someone to come and pick plankton for a month or two," Brennan said.

"I was only there for a couple of months when (a job) opened up at Woods Hole, which was the sea-going arm of the outfit. That was my first full-time job with the Fisheries Service. I was a biological technician."

The job eventually sparked his interest in international affairs.

Brennan was one of a handful of American scientists who went to sea on commercial vessels from the Soviet Union. "We had this cooperative program with the Soviets, basically doing a full series sampling of the marine environment from North Carolina to Nova Scotia. Hundreds of stations. We were doing everything from chlorophyl to primary productivity (measurements), from plankton to nekton surveys," he said.

The politics of the operation were not clear to him. "I was on the collecting end," he said. But they fascinated him nonetheless.

"This was 1977, the first year of the implementation of the Magnuson Act that called for an extension of our jurisdiction out to 200 miles, and that had an impact on nations that had been fishing along our coasts, including the Soviets. There was an agreement between the governments of the United States and the Soviet Union. The Soviets would provide one of their vessels and scientists, and we would supply scientists and equipment and engage in this broad fisheries research effort to the benefit of both nations," Brennan said.

Living and working on the Soviet ship was an eye opening experience for Brennan, particularly since it was the height of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union.

"It was definitely different than living in Smalltown, U.S.A. And it was definitely different than being on a U.S. merchant ship," he said. "A ship is a microcosm of society. This was a society that our generation of young people grew up fearing."

The experience was not what he expected.

For one thing, in an era of regular defections of dissidents from Soviet states, Brennan found that "every person from the Soviet Union wasn't looking to defect. There were aspects of their society they perhaps found objectionable. But they weren't all looking to come here," he said.

"They were real people. They had hearts and souls. And they were likeable people," he said. Brennan learned to speak "Pidgin Russian" and made friends with his Soviet shipmates.

During one in-port period in Narragansett, the Soviet ship anchored in the harbor for a "festival, probably organized by Ken Sherman. They even brought on board a band," Brennan said.

Brennan invited his brother, who was then working with the Defense Department developing "black box" technology for anti-submarine warfare aimed at the Soviets. At the festive shipboard party, when Brennan snapped a picture of his brother and his sister-in-law-to-be in front of the hammer and sickle Soviet logo on the ship's stacks, his brother remarked, "This is a lot better than figuring out ways to 'demise' them." Brennan agreed.

Another experience off the northern New England coast piqued his resolve to better understand the esoteric mysteries of international relations.

"The United States and Canada were in conflict over the Hague Line, the boundary between the two countries, being that both countries had extended their jurisdiction," Brennan said. "This ended up in the World Court. I was on one of these Soviet ships and we were about to clear into the Canadian zone from the U.S. side of this disputed area. It was early in the morning, maybe one or two o'clock. I was on watch. As was the practice, we had to radio from the (Soviet) vessel to the Canadian Coast Guard for permission to come across the line. We identified the vessel as from the Soviet Union, conducting this joint survey, and that we had a number of Americans on board. We were denied access," he said. "But we weren't denied access because it was a Soviet ship. We were denied access because of the six Americans on board. The whole thing, the extension of jurisdiction, really fed my interest in policy and international affairs."

From this practical example of international relations early in his NOAA career, Brennan has now come full circle to the lead international affairs job at NOAA.

"I told Scott Gudes when I first met him and he gave me a NOAA pin that the day I went to work at Woods Hole and they gave me a NOAA sticker, which was basically a parking pass with the NOAA logo, I was so proud of that, just to be a part of the organization," Brennan said.

"I'm extremely fortunate," he said. "I'm really tickled to be back here."

Houston

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improving safety by providing flight crews timely and accurate information.

Kenul said that whenever he tells Houston he's doing a good job, Houston tries to do an even better job. "The more responsibility I give him, the more he takes on," Kenul said. "He keeps developing and developing. I give him one line of instruction, and he explores every possibility to get the job done."

Houston recently spearheaded the center's effort to determine how best to replace NOAA's under-utilized aircraft with platforms that could better serve NOAA programs. Normally, when platforms are sold, the money goes into the general treasury. But through extensive research, Houston learned of procedures NOAA can follow to get GSA approval to use the same proceeds to get the platform it needs. He then put the necessary mechanisms in place to retain the funds. Now, for example, when the Aircraft Operations Center sells a Bell 212 helicopter that isn't being used much, the funds from the sale can be used to buy a highly versatile Twin Otter airplane that can support diverse missions.

Houston's initiative, persistence and ability to work with others has saved the Aircraft Operations Center a great deal of money elsewhere as well. He has been working with the FAA to certify NOAA's two Lake Renegade Seawolf amphibious aircraft, originally manufactured for the U.S. Air Force.

NOAA has only been able to operate the Seawolf aircraft as public use platforms since they lacked FAA certification, although they had all necessary certification modifications installed at the factory. The certification of the aircraft requires the purchase of a supplemental type certificate from the manufacturer required by the FAA to certify the modifications to the aircraft meet all the required federal standards for aircraft use. After two years of persistence, Houston persuaded the manufacturer to reduce the cost of the certificates for both Lake aircraft, saving the Aircraft Operations Center $200,000.

"He knows how to deal with other agencies, such as the FAA. He talks their language and becomes their best friend. They love dealing with him because he's such a nice guy. He's able to expedite any paperwork we need from the FAA. I'm blessed to have him working here on my staff," Kenul said.

McKeeby

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work with people from all over the federal system and gain a variety of perspectives.

McKeeby also conducts program evaluations of federally approved wildlife reserves and coastal programs. These evaluations are mainly conducted to ensure that all conditions needed to gain federal funding are being met. They usually include a detailed analysis of the group being evaluated, notification to the group that they will be evaluated, an on-site visit and a report.

McKeeby has evaluated programs in the Jobos Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve in Puerto Rico and co-led the evaluation of the Puerto Rico coastal management program. She says she enjoys these projects because they allow her to learn about each project in detail, and also visit many different sites.

McKeeby began working with NOAA in December 1999 after earning her masters degree in marine policy from the College of Marine Studies at the University of Delaware.

On working for the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, McKeeby said, "I really enjoy the work, the office and the people I work with. I like that I get to work on a variety of different projects, not the same thing day in and day out." She enjoys the fact that not only can she apply her degree to her job, her job is something that is always interesting and challenging.

McKeeby was modest when it came to describing her achievements, but others working with her had glowing reviews of her performance.

"Rosemarie is a pleasure to work with. She's always willing to go the extra mile. Nothing is too much for her," said her supervisor, Vickie Allin. "Rosemarie's hard work and dedication to marine conservation are recognized by everyone she works with."

Another supervisor, Doug Brown, described McKeeby as "a diligent, hardworking individual who is also a good thinker." He has been impressed not only by the number of projects she can work on at one time, but also how efficiently she manages to get them done. "I only wish we had more like her," Brown said.

The NOAA Report is a monthly publication for NOAA employees from the Office of Public and Constituent Affairs, Washington, D.C.
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