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NOAA GREAT LAKES LABORATORY CELEBRATES 30 YEARS OF RESEARCH

Three decades of research devoted to the Great Lakes will be celebrated during anniversary activities at the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory in Ann Arbor, Mich.

"From lake levels to invasive species to ice cover, NOAA scientists in Ann Arbor conduct research on practically every drop of water in the Great Lakes," said Tim Keeney, deputy assistant secretary for oceans and atmosphere. "Their efforts over the past 30 years have helped us better understand these natural resources that are enjoyed by millions of people for their beauty and economic opportunities."

Keeney is one of the invited guests participating in the 30th anniversary celebration ceremony April 26 at the Holiday Inn North Campus in Ann Arbor. An open house is scheduled for April 25 at the laboratory.

The only NOAA laboratory to focus exclusively on the Great Lakes, NOAA's Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory (GLERL) was founded in 1974 following a U.S. – Canada 1972-73 International Field Year for the Great Lakes (IFYGL). The IFYGL was part of a bi-national effort to address rising concerns about the threat of widespread pollution to the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem.

GLERL Director Steve Brandt said that GLERL has recently extended its research focus beyond the understanding of ecosystem dynamics to a new area of ecological forecasting.

"This is a more proactive scientific approach and an exciting chance to build on existing knowledge toward predicting how the Great Lakes ecosystem will change in the short- and long-term," Brandt said. "A clear picture of what's ahead can be highly valuable to effective management and protection of Great Lakes resources because it allows managers and decision makers to recognize threats early on and take pre-emptive action before real problems set in."

From its inception, GLERL science has been organized largely around developing computer-based models to help scientists understand and explain complex change over wide ranges of time and space. Results from running such models over varied states and conditions in turn reveal valuable insight into physical, chemical, and biological components of the ecosystem. Such knowledge can be used to devise best strategies to ensure protection of life and property, economic well-being, and environmental health and integrity. Such models and accomplishments include:

- A model to simulate the intensity of Lake Erie storm surges based on lake-wide wind forcing now used by the NOAA's National Weather Service (NWS) as a standard operational forecast procedure.
- A Great Lakes spill trajectory model used operationally by both the NWS and the U.S. Coast Guard.
- Water-Shed, a non-point source pollution model used by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service and EPA to determine the most cost-effective pollution control strategies.
- A forecast model made available to the NWS for prediction of ice formation, thickness and date of breakup at specific locations along the St. Mary's River.
- A major interagency, international, interdisciplinary program examining the impact of winter/spring storms on southern Lake Michigan – Episodic Events Great Lakes Experiment (EEGLE) which included over 40 investigators from 16 institutions conducting research over a 6-year period.

GLERL also conducts extensive research on aquatic invasive species issues and houses NOAA's National Center for Research on Aquatic Invasive Species. The lab operates two research vessels out of its Lake Michigan Field Station in Muskegon, Michigan, while developing a network of near-lake meteorological stations and marine instrumentation as part of a Great Lakes coastal observing system.

On the Web:
NOAA: www.noaa.gov
GLERL's 30th Anniversary events:
http://www.glerl.noaa.gov/news/2004/30anniversary.html