



TOPSIDE



NOAA Diving Program News - November 2008

Current Events

On October 24 NDC announced availability of the dive fatality report and disseminated guidance on lessons learned from this tragic occurrence to all divers. In addressing the report, the NDCSB convened a third Board meeting at NDC this month. A clearer understanding of NDC activities including the challenges and obstacles which are being addressed can be had from reading the minutes. NDC staff, RADM Bailey, and CAO Broglie are all working on a 34-point Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for the NDP. 15 of these items have been Closed. The changes seen in recent months are due to CAP compliance as well as follow-through on earlier initiatives. Three upcoming actions include the following:

- Consider requiring a safety stand down day each year to review NOAA diving regulations, standards and policies; diving procedures; and diving equipment and conduct (and document) in-water emergency drills.
- Consider establishing a dive unit inspection process in addition to the annual self survey which would include inspection by an outside entity (NDC representative) that could observe the dive team while operating, conduct drills, and review the requirement contained in the self survey.
- Develop Performance Plan language appropriate for LODOs, UDSs, and divers consistent with the roles and responsibilities defined in the Scientific Diving Standards & Safety Manual.

Safety Stand-Downs

The NDCSB agrees with this recommendation. UDSs will complete annual safety stand-down training and will document it on the Annual Unit Inspection Checklist. The Diving Safety Officer will announce soon.

Dive Unit Inspections

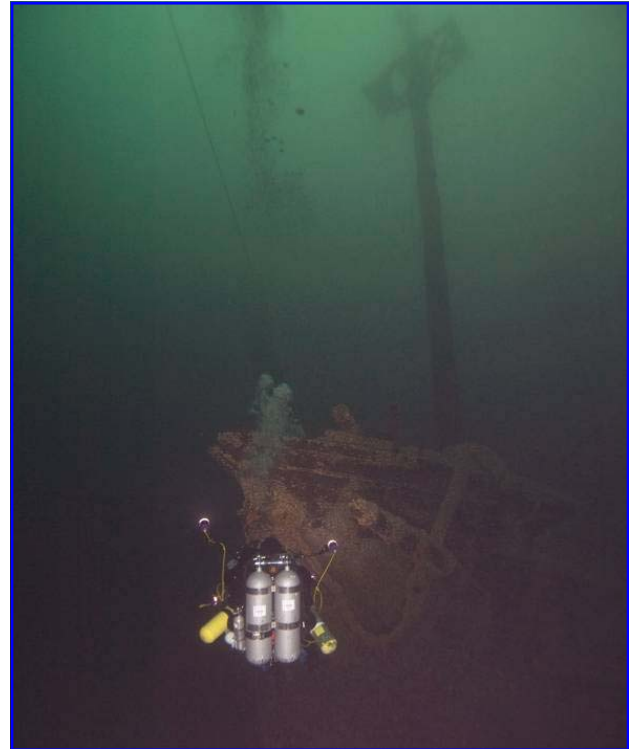
A proposal including funding requirements for the implementation of a comprehensive, dive unit inspection program will be prepared and reviewed by the NDCSB then forwarded to the Director, OMAO and NOAA CAO for consideration by the end of the second quarter FY09.

Performance Plans

Workforce Management and the NOAA Executive Council have been briefed on the need to have diving program roles and responsibilities described in individuals' performance plans. Stay tuned.



Lake Huron wreck diving



NOAA diver Tane Casserely shoots video at the wreck of the schooner *Kyle Spangler* in northern Lake Huron. Resting in 180 feet of water, the 130-foot wooden schooner is completely intact with both masts standing. A team from the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, NOAA Maritime Heritage Program and the National Undersea Research Center-UNC-Wilmington spent two weeks documenting the site this past September.

~ by Russ Green, UDS - TBMNS 

Equipment Notes

The Shadow alternate in-line air source is still causing problems in the field with restricted movement and access to the BCD inflator. NDC is researching alternate models.

NDC Instructor Bill Gordon and NOS LODO Greg McFall both attended the Diving Equipment and Manufacturing Association (DEMA) show in Las Vegas on October 22 -25.



New Proposal

NOAA Dive Training and Certification Program

Dave Dinsmore has envisioned an entirely new NOAA training and certification program to begin in FY10. It is intended to improve diver safety and effectiveness. Major components include the development of a 5-day NOAA Diving Orientation and Evaluation Course for personnel interested in obtaining a NOAA Science Diver certification. To implement this, Train-the-Trainers at NDC and regional approaches are both considered. Working Diver training and certification will be refocused on teaching advanced-oriented working skills to experienced divers only. Examples of skills that might be taught in the new Working Diver course include:

- ◆ Underwater rigging
- ◆ Lifting objects using lift bags and come-alongs
- ◆ Use of hydraulic and pneumatic tools
- ◆ Use of line-tended scuba equipment and techniques
- ◆ Use of diver-carried passive and active sonar systems
- ◆ Ship husbandry (expanded)
- ◆ Search and recovery techniques (expanded)

Numerous options for provision of initial dive training are discussed including using local dive shops, using a contracted vendor, and a 5-day course at NDC. This last option would only be viable with additional staff and financial support.

The Review of NOAA's Dive Training & Certification Program and Recommendations for Improvement report is currently being reviewed and evaluated by the NDCSB.



Tethered Scuba Course

NDC will be teaching the use of tethered scuba equipment and techniques to 9 participants on December 1-5. Three teams of 3 will attend: NOS TIDES group; *NOAA Ship Delaware II* (2 divers, 1 tender); and *NOAA Ship Miller Freeman* (2 divers, 1 tender). This course will include classroom presentations on line tending, equipment, procedures, standards, emergency procedures, ship husbandry and a projects briefing. The majority of the class will be spent actually diving and tending. Diving students will work on various projects while tended. The *NOAA Ship Rainier* and *NOAA Ship Fairweather* have volunteered to participate in this exciting new training event.

More information will be announced following the class.



Getting it done in Key Largo



On Thursday, November 6 the FKNMS Key Largo Dive Unit conducted mandatory biannual dive training. All eight divers participated in the training which included classroom presentations and discussions covering policies and regulations, SCUBA diving procedures, rescue techniques, oxygen therapy for diving accidents and review of the new NOAA Reserve Air Supply System. The divers then moved to the FKNMS boat docks where buddy teams assembled and then inspected each others dive gear for proper set up and condition of gear. After pre-dive checklists were completed, the divers boarded the NOAA R/V *Odyssey*, operated by Captain Don Mooney and transited to Sand Island Reef to perform checkout dives and rescue skills. Nancy Diersing, of the FKNMS Upper Region Education Staff provided photo documentation of the days activities. The training was conducted by Upper Region Operations Manager Bill Valley (UDS).

~ by Capt. Bill Valley

Information on NDC fees

The rationale for the FY09 SEP fee increase from \$400 to \$500 is listed here. NDC began with last year's assessment of \$400 and added: \$5750 for part-time technician contractor services; \$8730 for regulator servicing; \$29500 for 100 new regulators; and \$1300 for shipping and additional parts. This is a total of \$46180 in anticipated new expenses for FY09 associated with including the RASS in the SEP. This amount was divided by 400 divers to come up with a \$115 increase. This was rounded down to \$100. Note: Did you know that in addition to the annual assessments, there are initial startup fees for new Working and Scientific divers of \$400? These bills route through the same administrative process on a quarterly basis.

LT Cimilluca and Laurie Barber travel to Silver Spring next week to meet with OMAO's new CFO to discuss the SEP program, NDC's new training fees and other financial management concerns.

