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**NOAA, PARTNERS CREATE THREE CENTERS  
FOCUSED ON LAKES/OCEANS AND HUMAN HEALTH**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration along with its scientific and academic partners, today announced the creation of three research centers in Washington, South Carolina, and Michigan. These centers will study how humans impact the oceans and Great Lakes and how, in turn, those bodies of water can impact human health. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

"These centers will start an entirely new approach to ocean research. The oceans have a major impact on our daily health and we need to learn a great deal more about what ocean pollution is doing to both marine creatures and our food supply," said U.S. Sen. Ernest Hollings of South Carolina. "I'm also convinced we haven't even begun to know the good that can come from oceans. One day our oceans will be a major source of new drugs, and these new centers will speed that development."

"I am pleased to see NOAA expand its research on the relationship between human health and the Great Lakes and oceans," said U.S. Rep. Vernon J. Ehlers of Michigan. "I am especially gratified that the Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory in Ann Arbor will focus on issues such as harmful algal blooms and water quality in the Great Lakes Basin, which are issues that have been a focus of my work in Congress for several years."

"The oceans and the Great Lakes are inextricably linked to the health of humans who inhabit both coastal and inland areas," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "These centers are the cornerstone of NOAA's Oceans and Human Health Initiative and one of the ways we will work with our partners to better understand the nature of interactions between human health and ocean processes."

Established by Congress in 2003, the Oceans and Human Health Initiative includes internal and external peer-reviewed research, a distinguished scholars and traineeship program, and the three centers in Seattle, Wash., Charleston, S.C.; and Ann Arbor, Mich.

Each center will receive just over \$2 million for the first year, with much of that going to external partners. Total funding for the initiative in FY03 and FY04 is \$18 million. The remainder of the funding will go to the external grants program, the distinguished scholars and traineeship programs, internal research, and education and outreach.

Each center will focus on issues such as beach safety, seafood quality, coastal pollution, and marine toxins and pathogens. The centers will work with each other and the four new research centers established by the National Science Foundation and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

The NOAA centers are located at:

The Northwest Fisheries Science Center (NWFSC) in Seattle, Wash., which will use a broad-based ecosystem approach to investigate infectious diseases, biotoxins, and chemicals that directly impact human health through seafood. The center will also study the use of marine organisms as sentinel species for potentially harmful pathogens, biotoxins, and chemicals present in the ocean environment. Research will help evaluate risks and benefits of eating different seafood products, understand how key stressors influence human health, and be better able to forecast and mitigate threats to human health from contaminated seafood. Key partners include the University of Washington, the Marine Mammal Center, Oregon State University, Institute for Systems Biology, Washington State University, University of California-Davis, and NOAA Fisheries' Alaska Fisheries Science Center. Dr. Usha Varanasi, director of the NWFSC, will be the center's director.

Hollings Marine Laboratory (HML), Charleston, S.C., will address fundamental questions about the quality and safety of our coastal waters and the seafood they contain. The center will also develop new biotechnological methods to enhance NOAA's ability to identify and characterize chemical and microbial threats to marine ecosystems and humans. The center's goal is to determine if healthy coastal ecosystems are associated with healthy people and healthy economies. HML is operated as a partnership among NOAA, the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), and three South Carolina institutions, including the S.C. Department of Natural Resources, the College of Charleston, and the Medical University of South Carolina. Dr. Fred Holland, director of HML, will be the center's director.

Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory (GLERL) in Ann Arbor, Mich., will use multidisciplinary research to develop technology for predicting the formation of toxic algal blooms, beach closings, and water quality in the Great Lakes basin. The goal of the center is to use GLERL's broad scientific expertise to significantly reduce threats to human health through ecological forecasting, which uses scientific understanding and models of climate, weather, circulation patterns, hydrology, land use, and biology to predict the location and severity of toxins in the water, beach closures, and water quality conditions. Key partners include Michigan State University, University of Michigan, Florida Institute of Oceanography, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Geologic Survey, and the NOAA Beaufort Laboratory. Dr. Stephen Brandt, director of GLERL, will be the center's director.

NOAA is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of the nation's coastal and marine resources.

On the Web:

NOAA: [www.noaa.gov](http://www.noaa.gov)

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