NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

Congressional Brief: Sample of 2007 NOAA Activities

"NOAA's work touches the daily lives of every person in the United States and in much of the world. From weather forecasts in the Midwest to fisheries management on the East Coast, from safe navigation to coastal services in the Gulf, from remote sensing to climate research and ocean exploration, NOAA's products and services contribute to the foundation of a healthy economy and affect approximately one-third of the nation's gross domestic product."

- Vice Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
and NOAA Administrator

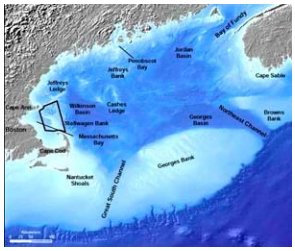
NOAA worked with Congress to support critical legislation including:

- Passage of the *Ocean and Coastal Mapping Integration Act*, *Coral Reef Conservation Amendments Act*, and the *Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance Amendments*.
- Consideration of aquaculture, *NOAA Organic Act*, corals, ocean exploration, ocean observations, and climate change legislation.

Complete details on the stories highlighted below may be viewed at: http://www.noaa.gov/newsarchive.html

Did you know? NOAA protects critical habitats and builds sustainable fisheries.

February - **NOAA Completes Ecological Study of Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Region.** NOAA released an online report, *An Ecological Characterization of the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary Region*, containing a wealth of information about the Gerry E. Studds Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary and the Gulf of Maine region. The report summarizes the results of a three-year collaborative research project conducted by the NOAA National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, providing a new regional look at the area's rich marine ecosystems.



February - **NOAA Fisheries Service Begins Process To End Overfishing By 2010.** Overfishing still occurs at various levels in 48 fisheries in U.S. waters, although NOAA has significantly improved the situation in recent years. NOAA Fisheries Service has begun the process of developing new guidance to assist regional fishery management councils in developing measures to end overfishing in all U.S. commercial and recreational fisheries by 2010. This deadline is a new requirement under the reauthorized *Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act of 2006*.

March - **NOAA Launches Website For Tracking And Verifying Dolphin-Safe Tuna.** The NOAA Fisheries Service established a new website to provide information and requirements to consumers, producers, importers, exporters, and distributors regarding U.S. dolphin-safe tuna. http://DolphinSafe.gov

March – **Historic Connecticut Fish Run Restored.** NOAA Fisheries Service, and a group of state and local partners, teamed up to install a fishway in Waterford, Connecticut that allows fish to bypass a dam and reach more than four miles of stream that have not been used by alewives and other fish species for 150 years. Alewives that have swum in from Long Island Sound in the spring, and gathered at the base of the Jordan Mill Pond dam, will now be able to reach their historic freshwater spawning habitat in Jordan Brook and its upland streams.

March - **NOAA Releases Five-Year Coral Reef Research Plan.** NOAA released the *NOAA Coral Reef Ecosystem Research Plan*, identifying priority research needs and guidance for coral reef research through 2011. The plan looks at key research objectives and long-term needs to enhance NOAA's understanding of coral reef ecosystems and provides guidance to coastal and ocean managers on regional research priorities to help preserve, sustain, and restore coral reef ecosystems.

July - **NOAA And The U.S. Fish And Wildlife Service Help Sharks Keep Their Fins.** NOAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have joined forces to expand the ability to analyze dried shark fins and identify the species from which they were removed. This new partnership will support efforts to curtail shark finning, the practice of removing a shark's fins at sea and throwing the carcass overboard. Shark finning is prohibited in federal waters of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean Sea.

October – **NOAA Issues Rule To Improve Sea Turtle Bycatch Monitoring.** NOAA Fisheries Service issued a rule under the *Endangered Species Act* to require fishing vessels in designated fisheries to take observers on board to help collect information on bycatch of sea turtles. Collected information from the observers helps better protect sea turtles from being injured or killed in fishing nets. All sea turtles in the United States are listed as endangered or threatened. Thousands die each year as a result of getting entangled in fishing gear. Observers will help determine whether existing measures to reduce sea turtle bycatch are working, or whether new or additional measures are needed. The rule applies to designated fishing vessels operating in both state and federal waters, and to designated U.S. fishing vessels on the high seas.

October – **Satellite Tags On Humpback Whales Expose Unknown Migration Routes.** An international group of scientists is learning new things about the migration routes and daily habits of South Pacific humpback whales from satellite tags the group placed in the thick blubber of 20 whales. Tagged off New Caledonia and the Cook Islands, individual whales are taking divergent and circuitous routes to the austral summer feeding grounds of the Antarctic, the data show.

"The tagged whales provided fascinating surprises for the research team almost immediately," said Dr. Phil Clapham of NOAA Fisheries Service's Alaska Fisheries Science Center. "The whales are telling us where they go, and we have already learned new things about their preferred habitats and migratory routes."

Did you know? NOAA conducts critical research and expeditions to advance our understanding of the oceans and atmosphere.

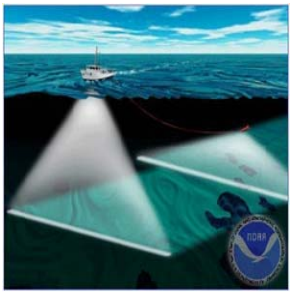
January – **NOAA Activates Newest Climate And Weather Super Computers.** NOAA activated its newest weather and climate supercomputers, increasing the computational might used for the nation's climate and weather forecasts by 320 percent. The new IBM machines process 14 trillion calculations per second at maximum performance and ingest more than 240 million global observations daily.

June – **NOAA Celebrates Keel Laying For Two Newest Ships.** NOAA celebrated a construction milestone — the keel laying — for two new vessels. *Ferdinand R. Hassler* is a small waterplane area, twin-hull coastal mapping vessel. Its design is particularly suited to NOAA's mission to map the ocean floor as it is less responsive to wave action than a mono-hull ship. *Bell M. Shimada* is the last of four vessels of the same design to be built for NOAA by VT Halter Marine. These sister ships are considered among the world's most technologically advanced fisheries survey vessels.

June – **First-Of-Kind Buoy To Monitor North Pacific Acidification.** The first buoy to monitor ocean acidification, a result of carbon dioxide absorbed by the ocean, was launched in the Gulf of Alaska and is a new tool for researchers to examine how ocean circulation and ecosystems interact to determine how much carbon dioxide the North Pacific Ocean absorbs each year.

June – **NOAA 'Green Ships' Win White House Award.** NOAA's three Great Lakes' research vessels have again been honored for the conversion from petroleum-based fuels and lubricants to bio-based products. The Office of the Federal Environmental Executive announced that the NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory in Ann Arbor, Michigan, won a White House Closing-the-Circle Award in the green purchasing category.

June – **NOAA Coast Survey Maps Arctic Sea Floor.** NOAA's Office of Coast Survey, in partnership with the University of New Hampshire's Joint Hydrographic Center and the National Science Foundation, embarked on a four-week cruise to map a portion of the Arctic sea floor. This is the third expedition in a series of cruises aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *HEALY* designed to map the sea floor on the northern Chukchi Cap. Scientists explored this poorly known region to better understand its morphology and the potential for including this area within the United States' extended continental shelf under the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea.



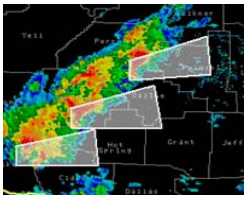
December – **NOAA Launches New Fisheries Survey Vessel.** A new NOAA fisheries survey vessel, christened *Pisces* by Dr. Annette Nevin Shelby, professor emerita at Georgetown University and wife of Sen. Richard Shelby of Alabama, has been designed to meet NOAA Fisheries' specific data collection requirements as well as the new standards for a low acoustic signature set by the International Council for Exploration of the Seas. She will be homeported in Pascagoula, Mississippi when placed into operation in late 2008, and will support NOAA Fisheries research and assessments in the Gulf of Mexico, Caribbean Sea, and along the U.S. southeastern seaboard.

Did you know? NOAA protects lives and livelihoods.

February – **NOAA Implements Enhanced Tornado Rating System.** NOAA's National Weather Service fully implemented the Enhanced Fujita (EF) Scale to rate tornadoes, replacing the original Fujita Scale. The EF Scale will continue to rate tornadoes on a scale from zero to five, but ranges in wind speed will be more accurate with the improved rating scale.

April – **NOAA Increases Tsunami Warning Capability.** NOAA announced the deployment of three new Deep-ocean Assessment and Reporting of Tsunami, or DART, stations in the Pacific Ocean, located off southern and central Mexico and Costa Rica. These newly installed stations provide added tsunami detection capabilities for Hawaii, Alaska, Guam, America Samoa, and countries in the Pacific.

September – **NOAA Provides More Specific Warning Information For Severe Weather.** NOAA's National Weather Service began issuing more geographically specific warnings for tornadoes, severe thunderstorms, floods, and marine hazards. The new "storm-based warnings" allow forecasters to pinpoint the specific area where the threats are highest, reducing the area warned by as much as 70 percent when compared to today's county-by-county system.



October – **SARSAT Program Continues To Save Lives Worldwide.** NOAA's polar and geostationary satellites, along with Russia's Cospas spacecraft, are part of the high-tech, international Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking System, called COSPAS-SARSAT. Since its creation in 1982, COSPAS-SARSAT has been credited with more than 22,000 rescues worldwide, including nearly 6,000 in the United States and its surrounding waters.

November – **NOAA PORTS® System Installed In Mobile Bay.** The Port of Mobile, Alabama became the 14th location in the United States to install the Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System. PORTS®, developed and operated by NOAA, provides accurate real-time oceanographic and meteorological data to mariners that can significantly reduce the risk of vessel groundings and increase the amount of cargo moved through the port.

Year Round – **NOAA Issues Forecasts, Warnings, Alerts, And Outlooks.** NOAA prepares and issues millions of weather, water and climate forecasts, warnings, alerts, and outlooks to help protect the lives and livelihoods of every American. These include:

- Daily national, regional, and local weather forecasts and warnings
- Hurricane, tornado, and inland flooding warnings and watches
- Seasonal weather outlooks for hurricanes, wildland fire, drought, temperature, and precipitation
- Tsunami alerts and warnings
- Marine and aviation forecasts, advisories, and warnings
- Space weather warnings, watches, alerts, and predictions

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