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**MAJOR NOAA OUTREACH EFFORT KICKS OFF AS  
PART OF SMITHSONIAN'S ANNUAL FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL**

With over 200 volunteers, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, kicks off one of the largest single outreach efforts in its history with the start tomorrow of the Smithsonian's 2004 Folklife Festival, held on the National Mall in Washington D.C. NOAA is the major sponsor of one of the Festival's three themes: "Water Ways: Mid-Atlantic Maritime Communities." NOAA volunteers will be staffing stations at the various exhibits in the Festival. NOAA is an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

"We're excited to be a part of this very popular annual event," said retired Navy Vice Adm. Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., undersecretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator who will participate in opening ceremonies at 10:30 a.m. Wednesday, June 23. "Visitors to the Water Ways theme area exhibits will have a special opportunity to learn how NOAA science and services along our coasts and oceans impact all of our lives in a daily way."

"Water Ways: Mid-Atlantic Maritime Communities" will highlight the coastal region stretching from Long Island to the Outer Banks of North Carolina. NOAA will have a strong presence at the festival, providing interactive displays, nautical charts, aerial photographs and interpretive activities that illustrate NOAA's involvement in the Mid-Atlantic region. NOAA scientists, communication experts and program staff will be on hand to help visitors understand the role that ocean and coastal processes play in shaping the past, present and future of the Mid-Atlantic region.

Major exhibit components will be provided by NOAA's National Ocean Service, NOAA Fisheries, NOAA National Weather Service and the Mid-Atlantic NOAA Sea Grant state program offices. Every branch within NOAA is represented with volunteers for the 10-day event that ends July 4th.

Other themes of this year's festival are Nuestra Musica: Music in Latino Culture, and "Haiti: Freedom and Creativity, From the Mountains to the Sea."

The Smithsonian Folklife Festival takes place June 23 – 27 and June 30 – July 4. It is open daily from 11a.m. to 5:30p.m. Evening events, including concerts, begin at 5:30 p.m. All events are free.

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Originating in 1967, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival is the Smithsonian's "museum without walls," an annual living exhibition of cultural heritage attracting more than one million visitors with music, dance, performances, crafts, cooking demonstrations and educational activities for adults and children of all ages.

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: <http://www.noaa.gov>

Smithsonian Institution: <http://www.si.edu>

Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage: <http://www.folklife.si.edu>