NOAA Announces Funding to Support Ocean and Coastal Observation Technologies

The NOAA Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®) is awarding $4 million in fiscal year 2010 competitive funding to the Southeastern Universities Research Association to evaluate the readiness of marine forecasts along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico coasts and improve them for operational use.

"Recent advances in science and computing capabilities are leading to improved tools to predict coastal ocean phenomena," said Zdenka Willis, NOAA IOOS Program Director. "This project creates a neutral environment to compare the latest models for improved forecasting that will ultimately benefit the daily lives and livelihoods of millions of Americans."

Scientists will work to improve the precision of computer models that forecast chronic issues of high relevance in the Atlantic and Gulf regions – such as flooding from storm surge and seasonal depletion of oxygen in shallow waters. They will also explore methods for effectively delivering model results to regional centers, scientists and managers relying on IOOS. The project is intended to identify the most useful models, as well as methods to translate the resulting information to the public.

"Improved models will provide better forecast resolution for the Loop Current in the deep Gulf," said Jerry P. Draayer, Southeastern Universities Research Association President and CEO. "By improving our predictability of coastal and deep water circulation, agencies can more accurately assess impacts of oil spills like the tragedy affecting the Gulf today."

Congress kick-started the grant opportunity with the inclusion of funding to support such a project in last year's Consolidated Appropriations Act. The legislation, and NOAA's subsequent Federal Funding Opportunity announcement, called for inclusion of at least 20 academic and research institutions to participate.

The Southeastern Universities Research Association is a consortium of more than sixty universities that work with government agencies and researchers to advance information technology and improve understanding of coastal, ocean, and environmental phenomena.

IOOS is a tool for tracking, predicting, managing, and adapting to changes in our marine environment.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit http://www.noaa.gov.

Other tools on the web:
NOAA IOOS: www.ioos.gov
Southeastern Universities Research Association: www.sura.org