NOAA NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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**Teacher Selected to Sail Aboard NOAA Ship *Oregon II***

When she applied to the NOAA Teacher at Sea program last fall, Annmarie Babicki, a fifth grade teacher at Park Elementary School in Auburn, Maine, hoped to experience ocean research first hand. Now onboard the NOAA Ship *Oregon II* in the Gulf of Mexico, she's getting that experience and more.

Babicki and the *Oregon II* scientific crew are on a longlining mission for sharks and red snapper as part of a project planned prior to the BP Deepwater Horizon oil catastrophe. A newly added part of the mission will support NOAA's seafood safety assessments in the Gulf. The crew will be catching fish to be analyzed for oil contamination.

The data that Babicki is helping to collect could also ultimately help scientists understand the health of shark and red snapper populations in the Gulf.

"NOAA's Teacher at Sea program immerses teachers in hands-on research experiences that give them clearer insight into our ocean planet, a greater understanding of maritime work and studies, and increased knowledge of environmental literacy," said Jennifer Hammond, the program's director. "Participating in real-world research allows teachers to gain experience actually doing science, which makes a significant impact when they bring back their knowledge to their classrooms, teaching students how the oceans affect their lives."

Babicki boarded the research vessel in Pascagoula, Miss., on August 5, and will spend 18 days assisting scientists with their shark and red snapper research in the Gulf of Mexico. She is writing logs that include information about important research of the day, life at sea, interviews with scientists, and photos. The logs are posted on NOAA's Teacher at Sea website at http://teacheratsea.noaa.gov.

"I am thrilled to be part of this opportunity that will allow me to participate in real-world scientific research and to experience life at sea," Babicki said. "Through the NOAA Teacher at Sea program, my students will not only be able to learn first-hand about exciting research projects at sea, they will be witnesses to them, and on some level, participants in them. Making their learning relevant through my own hands-on experiences is vital to getting students excited about science. I look forward to sharing my experiences with my students and fellow teachers."

Now in its 20th year, the program has provided nearly 600 teachers the opportunity to gain first-hand experience participating in science at sea. This year NOAA received more than 250 applications. They selected 35 individuals to participate in cruises. According to Hammond, educators can enrich their curricula with a depth of understanding made possible by living and working side-by-side with those who contribute to the world's body of scientific knowledge.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at http://www.noaa.gov or on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/usnoaagov.