



# NOAA

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND  
ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
June 23, 2010

## **Missouri Teacher Sails in Gulf of Mexico Aboard NOAA Ship *Pisces***

When she applied to the NOAA Teacher at Sea program last fall, Nicolle von der Heyde, an eighth-grade science teacher from Florissant, Mo., hoped to experience ocean research firsthand. Now onboard the NOAA Ship *Pisces* in the Gulf of Mexico, she's getting that experience and more.

Von der Heyde and the *Pisces*' scientific crew are surveying coral reef fish populations in the Gulf as part of a mission 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.

A teacher from Northwest Middle School in a suburb of St. Louis, von der Heyde boarded the research vessel in Pascagoula, Miss., on June 14 for the 19-day mission. She is writing logs that include information about research activities, life at sea, interviews with scientists, and photos. Her logs are being posted on NOAA's Teacher at Sea website at <http://teacheratsea.noaa.gov>.

"The signs of oil extraction in the Gulf were apparent the moment we boarded the *Pisces* in Pascagoula," she wrote in her June 14 log entry. "It wasn't until a few hours after leaving the bay that the officers on the bridge notified us that we were traveling through the oil slick. As we looked over the deck of the bridge, we saw a rainbow of sheen on the surface and even some reddish emulsified oil."

The data that von der Heyde is helping to collect could also help scientists understand the health of reef fish populations in the Gulf at a critical time as the oil spill continues.

"I am thrilled for this opportunity to work with NOAA to bring real-world scientific research into the classroom and experience life at sea," said von der Heyde when notified of her selection.

"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."

Now in its 20<sup>th</sup> 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. The agency 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, day and night, 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>.