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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 4, 2009

**NOAA, U.S. Coast Guard: New Ocean Current Data to
Improve Search and Rescue Activities**

A new set of ocean observing data that enhances the ability to track probable paths of victims and drifting survivor craft should improve search and rescue efforts along the U.S. coast. The data comes from the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS[®]), part of a joint effort among NOAA, the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association, the U.S. Coast Guard, and the Department of Homeland Security.

The new data sets include surface current maps from high frequency radar systems. The technology measures speed and direction of ocean surface currents in near real time, which the Coast Guard can then use to guide its search and rescue operations with greater accuracy. The maps can also be used to support other scientific work, such as oil spill response, harmful algal bloom monitoring, and water quality assessments.

"IOOS is known for providing information about tracking, managing and adapting to changes in the marine environment. Using it operationally for search and rescue is an important step," said Zdenka Willis, NOAA IOOS program director. "This is about saving lives."

The data will feed into Coast Guard servers to improve environmental observations for the agency's operational Search and Rescue Optimal Planning System. A short term predictive system that allows 24-hour forecasts for sea surface currents based on the most recent ocean observations will also be available in the Mid-Atlantic region.

"The Coast Guard is continuously striving to enhance its Search and Rescue capabilities by obtaining the latest operational environmental products that NOAA has to offer. Better data means search efforts can be focused on smaller areas, saving more lives by allowing us to locate and assist distressed persons more quickly," said Jack Frost USCG's Program Manager for Search and Rescue Optimal Planning System (SAROPS).

"From the recreational fisherman to the family swimming at the beach, people in the Mid-Atlantic region will enjoy a safer life as a direct benefit of applying joint technology and understanding to meet community needs," said Judith Krauthamer, executive director of the Mid-Atlantic Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association.

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>.

On the Web:

NOAA IOOS: <http://ioos.noaa.gov/>

Coast Guard Office of Search and Rescue: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/cg534/>

Mid-Atlantic Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association: <http://www.macoora.org/>