

Dozens of operational (real-time) and retrospective marine data and information products and services are available from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Obtaining these products and services, however, has not always been a simple job as users have been required to contact numerous NOAA dissemination points. A bold new initiative has been taken to fully integrate NOAA's ocean service capabilities through a network of Ocean Service Centers.

Following its major reorganization in December 1982, NOAA now includes five major line components: National Ocean Service (NOS); National Weather Service (NWS); National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS); National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service (NESDIS); and Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR).

NOAA was created by executive order in 1970 by bringing together a number of pre-existing offices and agencies into a unified organizational framework. A number of these components have antecedents with long, distinguished histories and predate NOAA by many decades. NOS, for example, traces its ancestry back through the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey to the Survey of the Coast established in 1807, making it the oldest U.S. scientific agency. Largely as a legacy of its historical development as an amalgam of pre-existing units, NOAA has continued to operate—under the auspices of its component offices—separate facilities and systems for providing ocean products and services. For example, nautical charts are available from NOS, marine forecasts and warnings from NWS, retrospective satellite data and imagery from the NESDIS National Climatic Data Center, and historical ocean temperature and salinity profiles from the NESDIS National Oceanographic Data Center.

The proposed NOAA Ocean Service Centers would serve two primary goals: to realign, coordinate, streamline, and thereby improve NOAA ocean services at reduced cost; and to improve the delivery of ocean services by providing "one stop" Centers for the general marine community. Initially, the centers would disseminate existing products and services. It is anticipated that closer cooperation and interaction among per-

The New NOAA Ocean Service Centers: Improving Access to Ocean Data *

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sonnel from all of NOAA's components will stimulate new ideas and result in new products and services in the future.

To test this concept, a NOAA Northwest Ocean Service Center (NOSC) was established at the new NOAA Sand Point Facility in Seattle, Washington in October 1983. Seattle was selected as the site of this first, prototype center because all NOAA components are represented there and the region supports a large, varied user community. Furthermore, the new Sand Point office and laboratory complex provides an excellent physical setting conducive to required interaction among center staff. NOSC is responsible for an area of 60,000 square miles (155,400 km²) in the northwest U.S.A., including estuaries and bays and extending out 200 miles to the edge of the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone.

Data Products and Services

The NOSC provides eight major types of ocean services.

Marine atmospheric and oceanographic analyses, forecast and warnings. An NWS Marine Weather Support Unit provides weather warning and forecast services. Major ocean prediction services are provided by an NOS ocean unit and include sea surface temperature analyses, subsurface temperatures and layer depth,

tides, surface currents, and wind wave and swell. The Center will routinely handle, forward, or interpret tsunami (tidal wave) watches and warnings.

Nautical charting, tide and current information. The NOSC has available and provides reference information on the most recent published products of the NOS Office of Charting and Geodetic Services.

NOAA-wide data and information. A representative of the National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service (with the support of local NOAA/NESDIS library personnel and resources) will provide satellite data and information products and services and assist users in accessing NESDIS archive databases containing historical data.

Marine advisory services, extension education programs, training, and technology transfer. These services are provided by the Sea Grant Marine Advisory Service Coordinator using the NOSC as a base of operations.

Marine environmental quality information. The NOSC will provide regional information on sources and effects of marine pollutants; location of closed shellfish areas and recreational beaches; and marine pollution incidents, including probable trajectory of spills and potential resources at risk, as well as the status of cleanup activities.

Living marine resource exploitation and management. The Center provides basic information, reports, and scientific papers on the status of stocks, economic studies, fishery statistics, and recreational fishing atlases. Regional Fishery Management plans, including amendments and relevant regulations, will also be available. Services to the fishing industry will include: market news reports, seafood inspection and grading, development of product quality standards, financial assistance to fishermen and processors, and assistance in organizing trade shows and missions.

Ocean service research. Space and computer facilities will be provided to support visiting researchers from NOAA's Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory and academic institutions in the region.

Environmental data observation and collection. The NOSC will routinely acquire, process, and temporarily store incoming marine environmental data. •

*Summary of presentation at the ninth annual IAMSLIC conference (see p. 17).