

NOAA'S ROLE IN USER COMMUNICATIONS A NEW OUTLOOK

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One of the central problems facing the Reagan Administration is how to improve the communication link between the Federal Departments and their user community. NOAA has begun a program in external relations that directs management interest toward improving user relations, i.e., determining product effectiveness, available services, user needs. One of the principal programs in improving product application is Port Objectives for Real Time Systems (PORTS). User seminars and meetings have been held in many of the major port cities of the United States seeking user comment and input to this advanced systems application. The opening last fall of NOAA's first Ocean Service Center in Seattle, Washington, is a prototype of a new approach in user communication providing access to NOAA's vast data banks.

It is with a great deal of pleasure that I once again have the opportunity to speak to you... and particularly with this being the Tenth Anniversary of your organization. As you may know NOAA has placed a high priority on user outreach and on improving its service delivery systems.

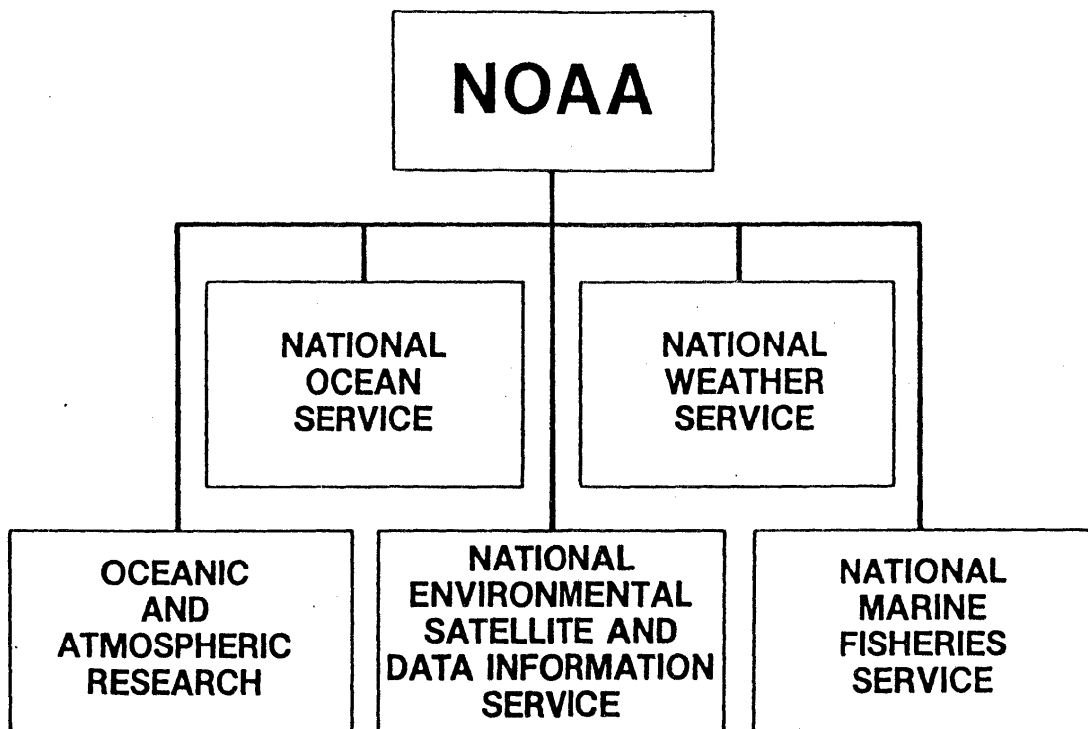
1983 marked the beginning of a new direction for user service in NOAA. After nearly a year of intense management review, Dr. Byrne announced in December 1982 a new organizational structure for NOAA that recognized the need both to improve external relations with the NOAA user community and to increase the visibility of ocean data.

This new structure was highlighted with the creation of several new offices. External relations staffs were established for the Na-

tional Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service (NESDIS) and for the National Ocean Service (NOS). These two external relations groups have been charged with the task of seeking ways to improve all aspects of user communications; to exploit established technical programs; to see if new methods could be employed to increase the understanding of the programs and the users' needs in relationship to the service provided; and to broaden program visibility to scientific and technical audiences through improved delivery systems, through technical conferences, special events, printed media, and public awareness programs. New relationships are emerging for NOAA's potential user constituency groups. A series of user conferences have been conducted to bring together those in the user community with specialized interests such as the fishing industry, ocean data systems, and marine commerce. The first of these conferences was held in Seattle, Washington, a year ago. The success of that event has lead to a second conference scheduled for late November in Anchorage, Alaska, and another is tentatively scheduled for mid-October 1985 in New Orleans.

The National Ocean Service External Relation Division is located in the Office of Ocean Services, one of five line offices of NOS, and is comprised of three primary elements. The first of these is responsible for developing events, conferences, and other forms of outreach to link users and special interest groups to NOS/NOAA programs. Publications and other forms of printed material are carefully developed to draw attention to NOAA's outreach efforts. The second element of the Division focuses on marketing as the principal vehicle for NOS product evaluation and coordi-

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nation of marketing studies for targeted product groups. The third element of NOS External Relations Division is directed toward international relations providing for coordination and conduct of international affairs which furthers NOS/NOAA and U.S. goals and objectives. Through careful interaction and coordination with other line offices of NOAA the international affairs of NOAA provide a unique opportunity to window scientific exchanges and improve international relations.

One of the primary goals of the External Relations Offices is to enhance the marketing of NOAA products and services. This effort has been a major initiative for the NOS External Affairs group. Since early 1984, NOS has conducted several marketing surveys to determine the actual need of its users in navigational marine data. The results of these surveys have brought about the design and marketing strategy for future products and services to insure that we are providing what the user wants.

In response to the Stevenson-Wydler Technology Innovation Act of 1980, every Federal agency engaged in R&D has established an Office of Research and Technology Applications (ORTA). NOAA's ORTA is housed in NESDIS to collect and disseminate information on the results of NOAA R&D activities that may provide solutions to state and local government problems or have application in the private sector. ORTA also facilitates direct contact between NOAA scientists and engineers and potential users of NOAA developed technology. ORTA's data dissemination is accomplished through Tech Notes, which is a series of monthly publications of the Center for Utilization of Federal Technology. Information is also distributed by the Marine Advisory

Service and the Federal Laboratory Consortium.

One of the central management problems recognized by the Reagan Administration is how to improve the communication link between the Federal Departments and the public need for service that is timely and accurate. NOAA has taken a major step toward improving delivery systems and timeliness of the information provided. One of the principal programs begun in ocean data to improve product application is Project P.O.R.T.S. which stands for Port Objectives for Real-Time Systems. Basically, what this means is that a system would be developed to provide real-time navigational data to the pilot of an ocean tanker navigating in port areas of the United States or perhaps a small boat owner or fisherman as he navigates in the intracoastal waterway system. A series of seminars and meetings have been held in many of the major port cities of the United States, seeking user comment for this advanced systems application.

The technology applied to this new system provides for telemetering of data for tidal, water currents, winds, waves, and atmospheric conditions to be sent directly to onboard-ship computers giving visual display (with the help of a CRT) of the data requested by the user. Incorporating both satellite and land stations with remote telemetering from gages and other forms of sensors strategically located in coastal and estuarine areas, the user will have direct access to NOAA's data systems.

This effort, being developed by the NOS Office of Marine Assessments, is but one of many exciting new ocean data systems that have placed NOAA in the vanguard of the Federal scientific efforts to improve user outreach.

One of the most significant user outreach efforts ever undertaken by NOAA is its Ocean

Service Center Program. This initiative to improve NOAA's services and delivery of services to the public has been spearheaded by Dr. Byrne to bring about a new awareness of NOAA services available to the public and to the specialized user groups. The first of these new centers opened in Seattle, Washington, in 1983. The center will coordinate and consolidate existing NOAA products and services, structuring them in such a way as to insure better communication delivery, and improved service on a regional basis. Careful consideration is being given to determine the types of users, their needs and special requirements on a regional basis. Each program element of NOAA will be represented at the center. The center will provide a one-stop service, with representatives from each of NOAA's components available on-site to offer expertise, information and above all personal support to ocean data users. The center will enable users to obtain information on ocean conditions, marine fisheries, ice conditions, marine mammals, sea ice locations, and marine weather forecasts. On-line data available will include current observations, satellite, and forecast information. Products include regional forecast services, navigational information, fisheries educational data, data referral, and NOAA publications. Offshore products prepared regionally will include marine weather warnings, winds, waves, tidal current predictions, sea surface data, mixed-layer depths, key isotherms, and specialized data on a real-time basis. We view the centers as opportunity to develop an ongoing dialogue with the marine community, as a major step in the program for community outreach, and improved interaction with our users, whether it be user group meetings, special product descrip-

tions, or bulletins on special topics. The Seattle Center was followed this past July with the opening of the Anchorage Ocean Service Center. Similar centers are projected for the northeast, mid-Atlantic, southeast, gulf and western regions.

The outreach program of NOAA has several other elements to its structure. The NOAA Extension Program was established as a staff office to the Administrator to coordinate and manage user information, with practical education and technological transfer, in the marine and atmospheric sciences. The program will build on already established extension-type projects monitored by NOAA's Sea Grant program and other related activities; by providing leadership, coordination, and focus so that NOAA can achieve a clear and coordinated extension effort throughout the many programs and organizational entities involved in NOAA user services. The Extension Program will concentrate on information to small businesses, state and local governments, and the general public. The program will identify areas in the business community where we are competing unfairly with the private sector. Other initiatives taken to open lines of communication with user groups include NOAA's Industrial Research Associate Program announced at the opening ceremonies of the Seattle Ocean Service Center. This program was developed to strengthen the ties between the Nation's private and federal sectors through joint efforts in research and engineering.

The Industrial Research Associate Program will give scientists and engineers from private firms an opportunity to work with NOAA scientists and engineers in such areas as the atmospheric sciences, hydrology, oceanography, space sciences, and fishing sciences. There are

also opportunities in geodesy, cartography, computer sciences, instrumentation, and communications. The program is monitored by the National Weather Service's (NWS) External Relations Office which acts in a similar capacity as the NESDIS and NOS external relations programs. With NWS, the Program seeks to establish and improve two-way communications with external users of NWS hydrometeorological products and services. External users include a wide variety of organizations, both private sector and governmental. Some of these are consulting meteorological firms, firms supplying weather forecasts and other data, airlines, shipping companies, utilities, construction companies, universities, radio and TV stations, local and state government agencies, and various offices and agencies of the Federal Government. Products and services encompassed by this program include raw and processed meteorological and hydrologic data; basic analysis and prognoses; meteorological and hydrologic forecasts and warnings including watches and warnings of floods, hurricanes, tornadoes and other severe weather phenomena; and other weather information for specialized users. NWS also has a Community Preparedness Program which is involved in seeking ways to save lives and mitigate the social and economic impacts of natural disasters such as tornadoes, floods, and hurricanes. To accomplish the objectives of this program, NWS headquarters and field offices regularly hold two-way communications between civil defense and emergency service agencies, amateur radio, REACT and other organized spotter groups, public and private schools, and private companies. NOAA services under this program include communication with the general public by local NWS officials through interviews with the media

and attendance at public meetings and events. The Port Meteorological Officer (PMO) Program of NWS maintains a liaison between the captains and mates aboard ship, the NOAA/NWS marine groups, and the U.S. Coast Guard. The PMO's provide on-site training; collect comments, suggestions, and complaints from the mariners; distribute NWS Marine Observation Program (MOP) materials; and act as the NWS/MOP field representatives. The program develops and prepares handbooks, observation forms, instruments, and training material for coastal and ship weather observers.

The last of the new organizational elements I would like to discuss is the Office of Business Affairs.

As a staff office of the Administrator, the Office is responsible for focusing on NOAA's linkage to the business community. The Office will strengthen and improve existing relationships and initiate and cultivate new associations between NOAA and the business community. The goal of the Office will be to enhance the country's economic growth in those areas in which NOAA has a presence, such as the oceans, the atmosphere, and satellite technology. The Office advises the Administrator on specific NOAA issues and/or problems affecting the business community in order to develop useful dialogues, and represents the Administrator and NOAA before business groups, serving as the official conduit for the Administrator's position on issues affecting the business community. The Office reviews NOAA's programs in order to identify those areas in which the business community can effectively participate and contribute to the successful accomplishment of NOAA's mission.

The new Office will develop and promote a cooperative working relationship and assure

effective communication between NOAA and the business community. Key objectives of the Office include keeping the business community aware of NOAA and Administration policies and programs; insuring that NOAA officials are aware of interests of the business community and issues of concern to business; promoting business involvement in NOAA policy making and program development; and serving as a focal point within the Office of the Administrator for all NOAA elements in contact with the business community. The primary objectives of this new Office in the coming year will be to coordinate roundtables, briefings and seminars that bring industry executives together with the NOAA Administrator and other senior NOAA officials; and to assist the business community to reach the right person for answers to questions related to any part of the NOAA organization.

NOAA commitment to user outreach and the improved link the commitment brings to our users will undoubtedly lead to improved products and services to the American public, scientific community, and industry. As librarians and information center officials, we ask you to join us in a renewed commitment to improve service to the ocean community.