



TOPSIDE



NOAA Diving Program News - February 2008

Good News!

STATUTORY AUTHORITY TO WRITE FEDERAL DIVE REGULATIONS

NOAA divers are currently subject to two sets of diving regulations: the NOAA diving regulations and the OSHA commercial diving regulations. **OSHA regulations are extremely limiting for scuba operations.** Several years ago an official with OSHA recommended that NOAA consider conducting a formal rule-making to adopt its own diving standards into the US Code of Federal Regulations which would allow NOAA to follow its own regulations and not OSHA's.

After a review of existing laws, as well as multiple discussions with Department of Commerce, Department of Labor, NOAA, and OSHA attorneys and staff, it was concluded that NOAA did not possess the statutory authority to promulgate regulations relating to workplace diving safety and health.

On December 26, 2007, President George W. Bush signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2008 into law which included the following statement: "The Secretary of Commerce is permitted to prescribe and enforce standards or regulations affecting safety and health in the context of scientific and occupational diving within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration." With this statement, DOC and NOAA now have statutory authority to publish and follow its own diving regulations.

The NOAA Diving Program has already started drafting language for the CFR that once completed, will be available for public comment prior to adoption.

This is a very exciting opportunity for the NOAA Diving Program that will ultimately: 1) provide a single, unified, and streamlined standard for NOAA divers, 2) incorporate all current industry techniques and technology, and 3) provide complete coverage for all the geographic locations in which NOAA conducts diving activities.

Please stay tuned for periodic updates on the progress of this exciting project.



Course Information

NDC will conduct the following training through FY 2008:

April 22 - April 25	Working - Refresher	Seattle
May 05 - May 23	Working Diver	Seattle
May 19 - May 23	Divemaster	Seattle
Sept 08 - Sept 26	Working Diver	Seattle
Sept 22 - Sept 26	Divemaster	Seattle

To register for a class, please fill out NDC's Training Request Form and send it to Laurie Barber at laurie.barber@noaa.gov. For more information, contact her at 206-526-6695.



The remains of a World War II F4U Corsair rest offshore of Midway in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands, one of the historic heritage resources at the atoll. (Tane Casserley/NOAA NMSP)

Annual Medical History Forms Due

Thank you to those divers who have already sent in their Annual Medical History Reports. NDC is in the process of reviewing them now. **These forms are due by March 1.** Many divers unnecessarily restate their past medical history on this form. The intent of this form is to obtain any NEW information from the past year for evaluation.

The **NOAA Diving Safety Board** meeting will take place at NDC, March 3-7. The top three agenda items are the proposed draft language for the CFR, a draft of the NOAA Diving Procedures and Policy Manual (replaces the NAO), and a review and revision, as necessary, of NDC's Strategic Plan. NDC encourages personnel to provide their Line Office/Fleet Diving Officer with discussion topics aimed at improving NOAA diving operations.

Dive Pay

Two new documents have been posted on the limited access website for NOAA divers, under Dive Pay Information.

Pay For Performing Dive Duties NAO-202-532A, effective January 25, 2008, establishes guidance for paying NOAA employees additional compensation for performing dive duties. It is a revision and retitling of the previously issued Order and supercedes NAO 202-532A, Scuba Diving Duty Pay During Training, dated August 13, 1992. It is a consolidated Order that classifies the four types of NOAA employees and describes their eligibility for dive pay.

Examples of Dive Pay Calculations Addendum NAO-202-532A is valuable for units in deciding how to pay their employees. Examples are provided for GS/GM and DOC Demonstration Project employees, Wage Grade employees and Wage Mariners.

<https://inside.nmao.gov/dive>



Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary Research Coordinator and Unit Diving Supervisor Steve Katz is conducting trilateration measurements to record historic artifacts associated with the California Gold Rush side-wheel passenger steamer *Winfield Scott* that wrecked at Anacapa Island in 1853. (Robert Schwemmer/NOS)

Congratulations

NOAA Dive Center congratulates the January class graduates on a job well done.

New NOAA Working Divers: Jeff Anderson, NOS/FKNMS/Key Largo; Hatsue Bailey, NOS/FKNMS/Key West; Amber Castillo, NOS/FKNMS/Key Largo; Paul Chetirkin, NOS/MBNMS; Jennifer Debose, NOS/FGBNMS; ENS Julie Earp, OMAO/NOAAS OSCAR ELTON SETTE; Pete Gamache, OMAO/NOAAS HENRY B. BIGELOW; Aaron MacNeil, NMFS/SEFSC/Panama City,; Danny Merritt, NMFS/PIFSC/CRED; ENS Megan Nadeau, OMAO/NOAAS THOMAS JEFFERSON; Missy Partyka, OMAO/NOAAS NANCY FOSTER; Luke Pavilonis, NOS/NRT1/Pensacola; Raul Penaloza, NOS/FKNMS/Key West; Todd Recicar, NOS/GRNMS; Jon Rockwell, OMAO/NOAAS DELAWARE II; Frank Younger, NOS/NRT4/Norfolk.

New NOAA Divemasters: Mike Dowgiallo, NOS/NCCOS/CSCOR; Tom Jackson, NMFS/SEFSC/Miami; ENS Chad Meckley, OMAO/NOAAS ALBATROSS IV; ENS Chris Skapin, OMAO/NOAAS ALBATROSS IV; LT Kelley Sage, OMAO/NOAAS DAVID STAR JORDAN; ENS Pat Sweeney, OMAO/NOAAS HENRY B. BIGELOW; Abel Valdivia, NMFS/SEFSC/Miami.

Annual Unit Inspections Due

Annual inspections by units, sub-units and ships are required by the NOAA Diving program. This year, completed inspection checklists should be forwarded to the unit's (or ship's) LODO/UDS no later than March 15, 2008. The inspection checklist standardizes guidelines for the condition and requirements of dive units/lockers to ensure unit operational readiness and safety. The intent of the inspection is to identify and address deficiencies. The form is readily found on NDC's website and in MOCDOCS. Contact LT Sean Cimilluca at 206-526-6460 if you have any questions.

Steve Urick, NDP - Profile

Steve Urick has been diving since 1975. He earned an A.S. degree in Underwater Technology from Florida Institute of Technology in 1983. He joined the NOAA Diving Program in 1981 at its Rockville, MD headquarters. Steve is a Diving Equipment Specialist and NOAA Master Diver, with a broad range of diving experience. He has extensive dive training and holds numerous Scuba Repair Technician and Instructor certifications. His initial responsibilities with the program included the design, development, testing and modifications to diving equipment, with an emphasis on Nitrox breathing systems and polluted water equipment. Steve transferred to Seattle in 1987, prior to the installation of the modern NOAA Dive Center and was involved with the installation of NDC's air systems and equipment. Steve became the Standardized Equipment Coordinator in 1995 and the OMAO Fleet Diving Officer in 2002. Steve has been a diving instructor for the NOAA Diving Program since 1984 and this year has become the Working Diver Course Director.

