



TOPSIDE



NOAA Diving Program News - September 2009

Personnel Announcements

OUTGOING

Laurie Barber, Office Manager, is resigning from NDC effective October 25. NDC regrets losing Laurie. She has been a mainstay at the front desk for two decades and performs many important duties. Many people think of Laurie's great attitude and service when they think of NOAA diving. In her own words, "I want to thank all the NOAA diving community for making my 21 years at the NDC memorable ones. It has been a great experience to work with all of you in some capacity and I have learned a lot from everyone. It was a hard decision to leave the Dive Center after so many years but I'm looking forward to my new position at the NMFS NWFSC Montlake lab to finish out my last three years with NOAA. Thanks again to everyone. I will miss you all."

INCOMING

LT Natasha Davis has been assigned by the NOAA Corps to be Executive Officer at NDC. Her report date is yet to be determined but is tentatively scheduled for February. LT Cimilluca will depart from NDC in April.

NDC will be conducting interviews with the prospective new dive technicians in early October. Also, a to-be-named new secretary will be working at NDC beginning in mid-October, on a part-time basis for three months.



DAMP filing procedures

Reminder~ Until further notice, CAPT Jane Powers, OMAO DMO, remains the primary NDC point of contact on the Dive Accident Management Plans. Her emergency cell phone # is 206-817-9792.

The DAMP should be filed at ndp.diveplans@noaa.gov, under the following conditions: 1) when it is updated annually; 2) when any information changes; and 3) when it covers a geographic range outside what is normally covered.

Dive plans are filed at NDC by UDS last name. Jennifer Carriere does this filing. She moves the plans from the e-mail inbox into UDS subfolders. Please include the UDS last name in the file name and/or subject header when filing a plan to help make this process more efficient. Thank you!



Technical Diving Used to Explore the Northeastern Hawaiian Islands



Dr. Randy Kosaki at 200 feet at Pearl and Hermes Atoll, Northwestern Hawaiian Islands. Black coral (*Antipathes* sp.) colony in foreground; blue trevally (*Caranx melampygus*) in background.

Photo by Greg McFall, NOS LODO

NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries conducted its first dedicated technical diving research cruise to the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands aboard NOAA ship *Hi'ialakai*. Exploration of deep coral reefs within the Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument (PMNM) included surveys for new records/new species of reef fishes, and surveys for alien/invasive marine species. NOS LODO Greg McFall (Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary), NMFS PIFSC UDS Ray Boland, and NDC's Jim Bostick supervised dive operations. Dive depths ranged from 170 to 250 feet. Trimix 18/50 mixes were used on a majority of these dives. 111 trimix dives were completed. PMNM Deputy Superintendent Dr. Randy Kosaki served as chief scientist and technical diver on the cruise, and the dive team consisted of technical diving expert and ichthyologist Dr. Richard Pyle of the Bishop Museum, Maritime Archaeologist Dr. Kelly Gleason of PMNM, and ecologist Dr. Yannis Papastamatiou of the University of Hawaii. Deep coral taxonomist Daniel Wagner of the University of Hawaii provided dive support. Among the biologically significant findings were numerous new records and one new species of reef fish. In addition, the northernmost specimens of Hawaiian black coral were collected at Pearl and Hermes Atoll, and a new type of nursery habitat for juvenile deep-reef fishes was discovered in extensive macroalgal fields at 200+ feet. Many thanks are due to CDR John Caskey and the officers and crew of *Hi'ialakai* for supporting every aspect of this mission, including small boat operations and in-water dive support.

~submitted by Dr. Randy Kosaki

Dive Unit Inspections

To all divers:

One of the recommendations in the 2008 dive fatality report was – “*consider establishing a dive unit inspection process in addition to the annual self survey which would include inspection by an outside entity.*” As the NOAA Diving Safety Officer (NDSO), I have been working towards the development of this inspection process, which is to be administered under the Diving Unit Safety Assessment (DUSA) Program, and managed by the NDSO. A DUSA is an audit of a diving unit’s capabilities for conducting diving operations safely and effectively. In the performance of a DUSA, there are six major areas evaluated - administration, training, diving equipment, air compressor system and stowage, support equipment, and diving operations. The NDSO and inspectors from the NDC will conduct these audits following the standards and procedures established under the DUSA Program. These standards and procedures have been approved by the NOAA Diving Control and Safety Board and will be posted on the NDC website for all divers to reference.

The initial plan is to annually inspect 30 of the 90 diving units in the NDP; thus, each unit is inspected by a DUSA inspector every three years. The first year of assessments will focus on units on the west coast, Hawaii, and Alaska. Units not receiving an inspection as part of the DUSA program will continue to complete and submit a self-administered annual diving locker checklist to their Unit Diving Supervisor (UDS) by January 15.

At this point the first inspections are to begin in late October or early November; you will be contacted by your UDS to schedule your unit’s inspection. I look forward to working with all of you in the development of a successful inspection program.

~ Steve Urick 

Special diver recognitions

CAPT Mark Pickett was certified as a NOAA Working Diver in March 1985. Since then, he has logged at least one dive for 294 consecutive months. That’s 24 years and 6 months! He is the longest-serving Active Diver in the NOAA Corps. Kudos! 

The deepest dive on open-circuit scuba recorded in the NOAA Diver Database was to 287 ft. for 14 minutes. The diver was Greg McFall, NOS LODO. He used 14/60 trimix and decompressed for 65 minutes. The dive was conducted in the Oculina Bank Habitat Area of Particular Concern, off the east-central coast of Florida. This deepwater coral habitat provides ideal spawning sites for numerous economically important species such as groupers and snappers. The purpose of the dive was photographic/video documentation. At depth, the visibility was 50 ft., the water temp. was 82 F and the current was 1.0 knot. 

Annual Unit Reports Due

Reminder to Unit Diving Supervisors

Annual Unit Reports are due to your Line Office Diving Officer by October 16. 

Cold water diving recommendations

1. Take a course to learn cold water diving techniques.
2. Refill the air tanks only at filling stations equipped with an efficient filtering and moisture removal system.
3. When preparing for a cold water dive, keep the tanks and regulator in a place that is sheltered from the cold until just before starting the dive.
4. Open the tank control valve for one or two seconds to make sure there are no water droplets or small ice crystals. Also check the inlet opening of the regulator.
5. In the event of repetitive dives, take particular care to ensure that the regulator is perfectly dry before starting the second dive.
6. Avoid breathing from the regulator outside the water.
7. As much as possible, try to prevent water from entering inside the second stage during the dive.
8. Never operate the purge button when not underwater.
9. Use the purge button as little as possible. In any case, never hold it down for more than 2 or 3 consecutive seconds; pressing it for longer may cause ice to form.
10. Try to breathe normally in order to minimize the cooling effect produced by the higher air velocity during overbreathing.

~ NDCSB 

The hazards of diving , part 2



In last month’s issue, we printed a photo of one of our divers being pursued by a shark. The shark has been identified as *Carcharhinus miniplasticus* and was estimated to have a total length of 14 inches.

Photo by Mike Judge/NMFS/SEFSC

Species identification credit to Andy David/NMFS LODO 