An Introduction to the NOPP Issue

We are very pleased to bring you this special issue of *Oceanography* magazine devoted to the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP).

Since its establishment in FY-1997 and extending through the recent proposal selection for FY-2000, NOPP has invested over $58 million in 48 different scientific research and education projects. A similar level of support has been committed to these projects in the form of cost sharing and in-kind contributions. About two-thirds of the NOPP funds have been invested in academia, one-quarter in government labs, and the remainder in industry and non-governmental organizations.

In order to characterize NOPP, we are presenting a set of articles describing representative NOPP-funded activities. As you read this issue, consider the broad class of investigations which NOPP is enabling. These would have been difficult to pursue otherwise, because the opportunities in question are not well matched with needs of the traditional funding agencies.

- Herring et al. describe how they were able to use the initial NOPP effort as a magnet to attract complementary efforts which coalesced into a monitoring and forecasting effort in the Gulf of Mexico which was much greater than initially envisioned.
- NOPP funding enabled Seim to work with the Navy to exploit existing offshore towers–components of an aircraft test range–as observing platforms for ocean observations on the continental shelf.
- Frye et al. were able to use NOPP funding to develop consensus among a diverse group of partners to focus development efforts on a communications problem with broad application–how to get subsurface data up to a surface buoy for relay ashore without a hardwire connection.
- As Walker et al. describe, NOPP was able to focus attention and funds on activities that nurture long-term research and education partnering on a national scale–bringing together for the first time in a coordinated partnership the country's leading marine education programs and ocean sciences research communities.
- NOPP support allowed the JASON Foundation to broaden the delivery of live expedition activities from remote locations–to include direct, interactive access by students using the Internet at schools across the U.S.
- NOPP has enabled initiation of the Argo Project–an *in situ* complement to satellites–to become, in effect, a real-time, upper-ocean WOCE, producing a snapshot of the global ocean every 10 days.
- Stammer and Chassignet describe how NOPP has closed an obvious gap in funding for longer-term projects such as involving satellite and *in situ* data assimilation efforts in support of CLIVAR and GODAE.
- Orcutt et al. describe how NOPP funding has supported the infrastructure to enable the collection of long time series of acoustic data relevant to ocean processes–something that individual agencies have been unable to do.
- With the Arctic underwater autonomous vehicle of Bellingham et al., NOPP provides an important resource for soliciting and enabling high-risk, high-return projects that would otherwise merely remain good ideas.
- Initial support from NOPP enabled Delaney et al. to begin a serious definition of Project Neptune, a long-term effort, but with high potential payoff for a number of disciplines.

In summary, we feel that NOPP is enabling the establishment of new partnerships–building new bridges between investigators from different disciplines and institutions. This is new thinking and new progress. We hope you enjoy reading the issue as much as we did preparing it for you.

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