

Workshop to Explore Environmental and Economic Benefits of the Ocean to California

Interagency group hosts "Small Sea Changes: BIG California Impacts" on May 25

May 19, 2010

Robert Monroe Scripps Institution of Oceanography/University of California, San Diego

Experts will detail the value of the ocean to California and the challenges of preserving its benefits in "Small Sea Changes: BIG California Impacts," a May 25 workshop exploring how monitoring and understanding the ocean delivers economic and environmental benefits to industries, government, and citizens of California, at Scripps Institution of Oceanography, UC San Diego.

The event, sponsored by the Interagency Working Group on Ocean Observations (IWGOO), will take place at the Robert Paine Scripps Forum for Science, Society and the Environment (Scripps Seaside Forum). It will draw senior decisionmakers from a wide variety of sectors ranging from energy, water supply and treatment, agriculture, commercial fishing, offshore oil and gas explorations, tourism and recreation, manufacturing, ports and terminals, railroads, airports, roads and highways, hospitals, and urban and industrial development. Speakers will include scientists from Scripps Oceanography and other research centers throughout California.

"Small Sea Changes: BIG California Impacts" is free and open to the public but seating is limited and registration is encouraged.

"The next few years will be crucial in determining how California responds to the climate and environmental challenges it faces," said Scripps Director Tony Haymet. "Better observations, trend analyses, and forecasts that support long-term decisions will allow businesses, policymakers, and citizens to not only understand the magnitude of the problems we face, but also provide options for conquering them."

The ocean has a profound impact on the economy and environment of the state of California. Oceans dictate weather and climate patterns extending far inland, affecting business activities and the environment throughout California. In addition, meeting the challenges of a densely populated coastal region requires anticipating localized hazards such as coastal flooding, coastal erosion, and harmful algal blooms.

Knowledge of the ocean delivers economic benefits to industries and government through better prediction of coastal hazards, management of coastal waters, and improved weather and climate forecasts. Sustained ocean observations help to ensure the welfare, safety, and security of Californians, protecting the environment in which they live, work, and play.

The workshop will provide participants with

- An understanding of how ocean observations benefit industry, government, and citizens;
- An in-depth assessment of coastal hazards and their impact on infrastructure;
- An understanding of the connection between ocean observation and predicting regional change;
- An exploration of how California's ocean observations can drive improvements in regional weather forecasts and climate projections; and

An opportunity to network across a range of disciplines and sectors.

Rising sea levels and temperatures, combined with more severe weather events, pose substantial coastal and inland risks, which can only be more reliably predicted by better understanding of the ocean.

Making the connections between the ocean and climate better enables scientists to determine when and where severe weather will strike. Reducing the uncertainties of climate impacts can significantly improve strategies for safe and economic infrastructure design, long-term management of existing and future assets, and the reduction of business risk.

Major industries in California such as agriculture, power generation, and water supply are especially weather-sensitive. Given the urgency to meet energy and water demands, people are looking to new technology for solutions. Ocean observations support both existing and future technologies by informing daily operational decisions through more accurate forecasting, as well as long-term planning through monitoring change.

"We want delegates to leave with a better understanding of how they can use ocean information to improve decision-making," said David Kennedy, acting deputy assistant administrator for NOAA's National Ocean Service. "They will learn how leveraging regional, federal and private partnerships for sustained ocean observations will ultimately unlock key economic and environmental benefits in California."

Media Contact:

