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Sanctuary deploys oceanographic moorings for 2015 field season

NOAA's Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary commenced the 2015 summer field season and its oceanographic mooring program with deployment of instrumented buoys between Makah Bay and Cape Elizabeth off the Washington coast. This program was initiated in 2000 to monitor water quality and currents, plankton density (including harmful algal blooms), upwelling and low oxygen events that affect marine life, as well as human health in the region. Ten mooring buoys are positioned in nearshore waters at 15 and 42 meters depth at five locations along the 135 mile sanctuary coastline.

The mooring buoys were deployed from the sanctuary's research vessel *Tatoosh* last week and will be recovered in early October before harsh winter ocean conditions develop. Data being collected include ocean temperature, conductivity (salinity), current velocity and direction, dissolved oxygen, fluorescence (a proxy for plankton), and turbidity.

Information collected this year may be particularly useful to scientists observing an area of unusually warm water in the North Pacific Ocean, a new phenomenon nicknamed by University of Washington's Nick Bond as "the blob". Also of interest is the timing of upwelling, which stimulates biological productivity by delivery of nutrient rich waters from deep to shallower waters, and occurrence of low oxygen events, or hypoxia, which can impact marine life including commercial fisheries.

Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary is administered by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and was designated in 1994 as the first national marine sanctuary in the Pacific Northwest. It encompasses about 3,189 square miles off the Washington coast, extending from Cape Flattery to the Copalis River. Significant natural and cultural resources include 29 species of whales, dolphins and porpoises, large populations of nesting seabirds, shipwrecks, and some of the most spectacular wilderness coastline in the lower 48 states.

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On the Web:

NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries: <http://sanctuaries.noaa.gov>

NOAA Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary: <http://olympiccoast.noaa.gov/>

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