

NOAA to Monitor Oil Slicks

The 25-ship fleet of the Commerce Department's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as part of a United Nations' program called Integrated Global Ocean Station System (IGOSS).

NOAA's participation in IGOSS is part of a worldwide pilot program designed to pave the way for the monitoring of marine pollutants on a global scale.

The two-year program is organized by the UN's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission and

the World Meteorological Organization.

The U.S. coordinator for IGOSS is Robert Junghans of NOAA's Office of Environmental Monitoring and Prediction. He is Deputy Director of its Oceanographic Services Office and was a former member of the Secretariat of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

The monitoring activities of the NOAA ships will cover areas in the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, Pacific Ocean and the Bering Sea, and will include both

inshore and offshore water.

In addition to monitoring oil slicks, vessels with appropriate equipment will collect samples of oil tar balls. Other ships will gather, for laboratory analysis, samples of dissolved petroleum hydrocarbons from the upper three feet of the ocean.

The information gathered by U.S. participants is being forwarded to NOAA's National Oceanographic Data Center. The data will be archived and exchanged among nations so periodic assessments can be made of the state and degree of ocean contamination.

U.S. participants in the IGOSS program also include the Coast Guard, Defense Department, academic institutions, and cooperating ships of the commercial fleet, which are recruited through the Port Meteorological Officer element of NOAA's National Weather Service.

Junghans said the Office of Technology of the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee soon will publish an analysis of marine pollution and safety measures in a report entitled "Oil Transportation by Tankers."

That report shows, he said, that about one million tons of oil a year are dumped into the ocean in standard tanker operations such as tank cleaning, deballasting, etc.

Additionally, about 200,000 tons of oil are spilled yearly as a result of tanker casualties, and an added 250,000 tons of oil pollution annually is associated with tanker dry-docking activities, he said.