

Study of Sea Ice Organisms

FAIRBANKS - The University of Alaska's Institute of Marine Science has received a grant from the National Science Foundation for continued support of a project studying ecology and metabolism of sea ice organisms.

The project, now in its second year, is directed by Dr. Rita Horner and Dr. Vera Alexander. The grant, in the amount of \$7,800, brings total NSF support to \$48,000.

Dr. Alexander explained the project is studying the algae population that grows in sea ice near the shore of the Arctic Ocean.

She explained a thin layer of algae grows in the bottom two centimeters of ice. "We have devised a new way of looking at its metabolism and rate of photosynthesis," she said, "using divers to study the organisms where they grow."

Research is being conducted near the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory at Barrow, on the north coast of Alaska.

Chief diver Robert Clasby will continue gathering data throughout the winter, in diving stints of 20 minutes or less. Duration must be limited because of cold temperatures.

Dr. Alexander said this layer of algae and its metabolism and rate of photosynthesis is a vital link in the food cycle of the Arctic Ocean.