

U.S. Hydro 2009 Conference Summary

By Jerry Mills, Commission 4 Delegate, USA

This year's U.S. Hydrographic Conference was held in Norfolk, Virginia from May 11-14 and was another very successful gathering of public and private hydrographers, academia and equipment vendors. Attendance at this year's conference was 420 with exhibits from over 40 organizations from industry, government and academia as well as several on-the-water equipment demonstrations on the river just outside the conference hotel. Of particular interest were the tours of the Research Vessel Bay Hydro II, NOAA's newest state-of-the-art hydrographic survey platform which works primarily in the Chesapeake Bay.



The technical program included 37 papers as well as nine posters for interactive discussions. The keynote address was given by John H. Dunnigan, NOAA's Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services and Coastal Zone Management and head of the National Ocean Service. In addition to the more formal presentations, there were ten well-attended workshops ranging from tides and side scan sonar to inland ENC's, channel condition reports and dredging volume computations.

In addition, this year's Student Outreach Program hosted nineteen students from eleven universities. This purpose of this program, which began with 3 students at the 2003 conference,

is to introduce the field of hydrography and associated education and employment opportunities to undergraduate students. Many of this year's students were majoring in GIS or civil engineering and had had very little exposure to the field of hydrography in their undergraduate studies. Their conference registration, transportation and lodging were supported by generous donations from numerous companies as well as The Hydrographic Society of America. On the Monday prior to the conference, the students attended a half-day workshop on an introduction to Hydrography the toured the Bay Hydro II and NOAA Atlantic Hydrographic Branch which provides QA/QC on NOAA's east coast surveys.



Caption: The students with the Outreach Program Coordinator, Jana DaSilva Lage (first row, center)

The three evening social events (the Monday Icebreaker, Tuesday Beer Social and Wednesday Barbeque at the Nauticus Maritime Museum) provided a terrific atmosphere for the telling of sea stories and the renewal of old friendships. Prior to the Wednesday event at Nauticus the battleship USS Wisconsin was open for tours for conference attendees. Dinner entertainment was provided by the steel drum reggae band the Calypso Nuts, much to the enjoyment of everyone in the unseasonably cold outdoor setting.