

The Nation's Environmental Data: Treasures at Risk

Report to Congress
on the Status and Challenges for
NOAA's Environmental Data Systems

August 2001



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Washington, D.C. 20230

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THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
Washington, D.C. 20230

The Honorable Ernest F. Hollings
Chairman, Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-6125

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I take pleasure in sending to Congress the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Report to Congress on Data Management, *Treasures at Risk*. This document was produced in compliance with Public Law 102-567, NOAA's FY 1992 Authorization Act.

Within the Department of Commerce, NOAA has the unique federal mission of archiving and making accessible the Nation's environmental data in support of environmentally dependent economic decisions and critically important environmental research such as the understanding of climate. NOAA carries out this mission through its National Data Centers, which collectively manage the largest, most accessed collection of atmospheric, oceanographic, and geophysical data in the world.

Throughout the 1990s, the NOAA archives have experienced a steady growth in digital data, more than quadrupling in volume by 1999 to more than 760 terabytes. By 2005, NOAA's holdings will be nearly five times this amount. The Internet has brought a parallel enormous increase in our users who request and access NOAA environmental data and information.

For the 21st Century, these archive and usage trends are expected to continue. NOAA envisions its data and information products to be available to the Nation as part of a national decision support system for the purpose of saving lives and property, supporting environmentally dependent industrial decisions, and contributing to the economic well-being and quality of life in the United States.

NOAA has worked diligently to make progress on its data management mission. This Document describes the progress made over the last decade and points to the directions we must take to ensure that NOAA will be able to manage environmental data in the next decade, thus ensuring that these national data treasures will no longer be at risk.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald L. Evans". The signature is stylized and fluid, with a large loop at the top and a horizontal line at the bottom.

Donald L. Evans



THE SECRETARY OF COMMERCE
Washington, D.C. 20230

The Honorable Sherwood L. Boehlert
Chairman, Committee on Science
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515-6301

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