



WILLIAM T. PECORA AWARD

SeaWiFS Team

In recognition of outstanding contributions towards understanding the Earth's biology

Since data reception began on September 18, 1997, the Sea-viewing Wide Field-of-View Sensor (SeaWiFS) has provided global views of oceanic biological activity with no interruption in service. SeaWiFS data have allowed the first extended view of the response of global ocean ecosystems to seasonal and interannual variability. The mission has delivered terrestrial and atmospheric research data products that far exceed the original ocean biology applications envisioned by its developers. The rapid turnaround of data and the wide variety of data products, combined with exceptional data quality, have established a new standard for satellite mission performance.

The SeaWiFS Team is a very successful partnership between NASA and Orbital Imaging Corporation (ORBIMAGE) of Dulles, Virginia. ORBIMAGE built, launched, and now operates the spacecraft, and NASA Goddard Space Flight Center SeaWiFS Project Office performed instrument calibration, algorithm development, product validation, and routine data reception, processing, and distribution. Use of the data has been greatly expedited by extensive technical documentation and user-friendly processing software provided at no cost to the research community.

SeaWiFS provided the first synoptic view of ocean ecosystem responses to a major El Niño-Southern Oscillation event. The imagery captured the collapsed ecosystem of the equatorial Pacific Ocean during the height of the 1997 El Niño warm phase. SeaWiFS also documented the rapid onset of the La Niña cold phase in May 1998, that produced the most intense phytoplankton bloom ever observed in the equatorial Pacific. The bloom covered nearly a quarter of the Earth's circumference; SeaWiFS imagery of this bloom was published on the December 10, 1999, cover of Science magazine.

Since early in the mission, SeaWiFS data have also been used to monitor terrestrial vegetation and to generate global composites of normalized difference vegetation index images. Numerous SeaWiFS images of Saharan and Asian dust outbreaks, hurricanes, fires, and volcanic eruptions have been featured in the news media. Coverage of the summer 2000 fires in the western United States was especially useful to forest managers.

Because of the success of the SeaWiFS program in providing not only high-quality science products to the research community, but also rapid-response data products for a variety of applied uses, it is most fitting that the SeaWiFS Team receive the 2000 William T. Pecora Group Award.

Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Secretary of the Interior