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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION THREATENED**

**Portland, Maine August 26, 2008.** With climate change, the impacts of severe weather, red tides and the health of the world's natural resources being top-of-mind for millions of Americans, understanding the ocean has never been more important. Nevertheless, several Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System (GoMOOS) buoys that collect data on temperature, currents, salinity, and more in the Gulf of Maine are at risk of being pulled from the water this fall due to funding shortfalls.

The loss of these buoys will be an immediate threat to safety at sea, climate change research, fisheries management, and much more. Ocean-observing buoys provide critical, easily-accessible information to fishermen, sailors, researchers, search and rescue, ship pilots and others on the condition of the ocean in real time, as well as 48-hour forecasts on wind and waves. Information below the surface on currents, temperature, and salinity enables scientists to draw more accurate conclusions on the ocean's dynamics, leading to more effective fishery regulations and ecosystem-based management. Further, continuous monitoring of the ocean reveals insights regarding the effects of climate change, which will be seen first in the ocean.

Philip Bogden, chief executive officer of GoMOOS, says "This is a critical situation for the many organizations and individuals who have come to rely on the important data we gather from these buoys. Once buoys are removed from the water, the precious time series of data they were collecting is interrupted, never to be recovered. And redeveloping this capacity in the future is far more expensive than maintaining what exists."

The GoMOOS buoy infrastructure benefits all of society, not just the individual users who contribute to 1.5 million page views on GoMOOS.org. The National Weather Service (NWS) uses buoy data in its reports and forecasts that are heard by all of society. Buoy data also contributes to more timely and accurate harmful algal bloom warnings, coastal storm surge forecasts, and water quality indices.

"Meteorologists rely on the valuable atmospheric information provided by GoMOOS," said Albert Wheeler, Meteorologist-in-Charge, NWS, Gray, Maine. "This data has proved to be extremely helpful for analyzing and predicting significant weather-related events over the Gulf of Maine, such as severe thunderstorms, Nor-Easters and coastal flooding. One example of this was the Patriot's Day storm in 2007. During the morning shift briefing on the day of the storm, forecasters noticed that wave heights at an upstream GoMOOS buoy quickly jumped to 32 feet. The duty forecaster used this information to increase the seas forecast for the WFO Gray coastal waters, and to increase the expected severity of coastal flooding along the New Hampshire and

southwest Maine coast. Major coastal flooding and 30-35 foot waves were experienced in the WFO Gray service area later in the day. The GoMOOS network is reliable and has undoubtedly increased the safety and convenience of mariners and coastal residents.”

“The loss of five ocean data collection buoys from Maine’s coast is a major setback for the Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System (GoMOOS) and for the health of our entire coastline,” said Senator Snowe, Ranking Member of the Commerce Subcommittee on Oceans, Atmospheres, Fisheries, and Coast Guard. “Without this continuous ocean data set, we lose vital information that the people, economy, and environment of New England depend on. It is absolutely critical that all parties work to secure funding to restore GoMOOS data collection to full operation. I also urge Congress to pass S. 950, a bill I introduced that would authorize a national ocean observation system with NOAA and would give GoMOOS and other regional network systems greater long-term stability to provide these invaluable services to the public.”

“The Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System has proven valuable in protecting the safety of fishermen and boaters, expanding our understanding of ocean weather, and evaluating and predicting the impacts of global climate change,” said U.S. Representative Tom Allen, a senior member of the House Budget Committee. “To remove buoys would severely hinder the system’s effectiveness, undermine collection of valuable data and compromise its important public safety functions. The House has appropriated money that would cover this shortfall, but the bill still awaits final passage in the Senate. Rather than curtailing GoMOOS, I strongly believe we should work to create a nationwide system based on the successful GoMOOS model. In April, the House passed my legislation, H.R. 2342, the National Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation Act, to do just that.”

Patrice McCarron of the Maine Lobsterman’s Association added, “Our fishermen check GoMOOS buoy data every morning with their coffee. The wind and wave data help them make safer decisions before heading out. We have also found that bottom temperature data from GoMOOS buoys has done much to help explain shedding and the timing of lobster catches over the last three years.”

To prevent this loss, the Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System and the University of Maine are seeking support throughout the region. Individuals and businesses can contribute supplies needed by the buoys, such as batteries, buoy cables, shackles, and sensors. Monetary contributions from companies or charitable foundations will support ship time for buoy deployment, staff time for buoy maintenance, and other important hardware needs. Community groups and individuals can help by getting the word out to decision makers that these buoys and the data they provide are highly valued. For more information on how you can contribute to keeping the buoys in the water, visit [www.GoMOOS.org](http://www.GoMOOS.org).

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