



Juliana P. Blackwell

NOAA Names First Woman to Direct National Geodetic Survey



The National Geodetic Survey is part of the National Ocean Service, which is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce. NOAA studies and predicts changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources.

Juliana Blackwell has been named the new director of NOAA's Office of National Geodetic Survey where she will oversee NOAA's responsibilities for the nation's spatial reference system. She is the first woman to head the nation's oldest federal science agency established by President Thomas Jefferson in 1807 as the Survey of the Coast.

Blackwell moves into the director's chair after serving for the past three years as chief of the National Geodetic Survey's Observation and Analysis Division, one of six divisions within NGS. Prior to that assignment she successfully managed NOAA's height modernization program, which has improved the efficiency and accuracy of height information used in surveying, mapping, and modeling nationwide. She also served as the NGS' deputy director since August 2008.

Blackwell is a 1988 graduate of Tufts University where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in mathematics. She received a master's in business administration from the University of Maryland's Robert H. Smith School of Business in 2007.

Blackwell joined NOAA in 1990 as an officer of the NOAA Corps. In her NOAA Corps career she served on the NOAA Ship *Ferrel* as a junior officer, and as fourth officer on board the NOAA Ship *Whiting* where she managed hydrographic survey operations prior to joining the National Geodetic Survey full time in 1996.

Blackwell succeeds David Zilkoski who completed a 34-year federal career, all of it in service to NOAA and the

National Geodetic Survey. His NOAA service includes three years as head of NOAA's Office of National Geodetic Survey. "Juliana brings both experience and a commitment to collaborative partnering with non-NOAA resources, which will enable NOAA to meet or exceed its goals," said Zilkoski.

"I discovered the National Geodetic Survey while looking at available officer billets in NOAA for my next assignment after *Ferrel* which would enable me to apply my math background," Blackwell told *POB* magazine. "I began with a one-year field assignment on NGS leveling, baseline calibration, and GPS field surveys. At the time, I was the only woman at NGS on the field survey parties, but, of course, there were others before me. I felt very much accepted as a member of 'the Survey.' Learning the art and science of geodetic surveying was the real challenge."

It was as manager of the Height Modernization Program that "it all came together for me." Blackwell worked closely with state and local governments, academic institutions, and the private sector, promoting the use of GPS (and now GNSS) to quickly and efficiently determine elevations.

"My work with 'Height Mod' took me outside the realm of field survey operations," said Blackwell. "Understanding 'how' we do surveys led to 'Wow! Here's what we do for people.'"

Blackwell's 16 years with NGS and previously with the NOAA Corps make her uniquely qualified for her new leadership post within the National Ocean Service. Congratulations!