

DNR-UPR pact aims to gather ocean monitoring data

BY JON RUST

jrust@sjstar.net
Of The STAR Staff

The Department of Natural Resources and University of Puerto Rico signed an agreement Tuesday to work together and with federal agencies to make ocean monitoring data widely available and develop a coordinated information system to bring together scattered scientific information.

The alliance, which also includes the University of the Virgin Islands, will be known as the Caribbean Regional Association, and its main effort is to create a "system of systems" for ocean-related monitoring, including satellite data, buoys, maps and tide gauges managed by different entities.

Under the agreement, the agency and universities will "accomplish . . . their common mission and enhance broad user access to ocean knowledge, data, tools and products," the document signed Tuesday states.

Its main task is to develop the Regional Coastal Ocean Observing System, which will be part of a national network of such systems being established by the U.S. National Office for Integrated and Sustained Ocean Observations, a partnership of agencies that was formed in 2000.

"This system will provide data, informa-



STAR PHOTO BY FRANCESCA VON RABENAU O'REILLY

A young boy plays at the edge of the sand as heavy surf pounds an exposed stretch of reef off Piñones on Tuesday. High waves were reported along the north coast.

tion and products on marine and estuarine systems necessary to the users and to the general public. . . . It is intended to serve the needs of users with measurements and

data transmission, data management and communications, data analysis and modeling," the agreement states.

The Integrated Ocean Observing System

is essentially a "system of systems" that will bring together ocean-related information from numerous federal and local entities.

The UPR, for example, may monitor coral reefs, while the DNER surveys water quality, NASA takes satellite photos of weather systems and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration monitors ocean temperature and wave action.

The integrated system is an effort to improve predictions of climate change and weather and their effects on coastal communities and the United States, improve the safety and efficiency of maritime operation, mitigate the effects of natural hazards more effectively, improve security, reduce public health risks, protect and restore coastal ecosystems more effectively and enable the sustained use of ocean and coastal resources.

The National Office for Integrated and Sustained Ocean Observations, or Ocean.US, was established by Congress and is supported by 10 agencies including NOAA, the U.S. Geological Survey, the Navy and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The information network it is establishing with local partners is the U.S. contribution to the Global Ocean Observing System and the Global Earth Observation System of Systems.