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NEFSC Researcher Honored with Establishment of Annual Lectureship in Woods Hole

An annual lectureship has been established in Woods Hole to honor longtime NOAA Fisheries Service employee Ambrose Jearld, Jr. for his work in making Woods Hole a more diverse, inclusive and welcoming community. Jearld retired from NOAA Fisheries Service on September 2 after 38 years of service.

The lectureship was created by the Woods Hole Diversity Initiative and the Diversity Advisory Committee, which were established by the six scientific institutions in the village to work together to attract and retain a more diverse workforce that represents the changing demographics of the nation. Leaders of the six organizations signed a formal agreement committing to a diverse and inclusive scientific community in 2004 and reaffirmed the commitment in 2012.

Jearld has been active in the Woods Hole Diversity Initiative since its founding, serving as former chairman of the Diversity Advisory Committee and as the founding director of the Partnership Education Program (PEP), a project of the Diversity Initiative. Since the PEP began in 2009, 122 students from 77 colleges and universities, including institutions that have not previously had Woods Hole connections, have spent the summer in Woods Hole attending a course on global climate change and conducting research projects with mentors from the various institutions.

"Dr. Ambrose Jearld is an inspiring leader in the effort to make the Woods Hole scientific community more welcoming and inclusive for all people," said Peg Brandon, president of the Sea Education Association (SEA), who announced the honor at Jearld's retirement party September 17 in Woods Hole.

"We see first-hand at SEA the tremendous success and vitality of the Woods Hole Diversity Initiative and the Partnership Education Program (PEP)," Brandon said. "PEP provides critical access to training and internships in the ocean sciences, and is an important pathway to future success for the growing network of PEP alumni. With this lectureship, named in his honor, Ambrose Jearld will continue to inspire us for years to come."

The Ambrose Jearld, Jr. Lecture will be given every summer in Woods Hole by invited scholars, scientists, authors and others who can challenge the status quo to bring perspective, knowledge and expertise to the subject of building a more diverse and inclusive community.

The lecturers will be chosen by the Woods Hole Diversity Initiative and the Diversity Advisory Committee, with the first lecture held as early as the summer of 2017. It will be given on the occasion of awarding the biennial John K. Bullard Diversity Award, last presented in June 2016. In years when the Bullard Award is not given, the Jearld Lecture will be given as a stand-alone event.

Born into a Navy family in Annapolis, Maryland, he lived on the family farm and attended elementary school in Orrum, North Carolina. A community rich with streams, ponds, ditches, and swamps, it was here that his interests in aquatic sciences flourished. He graduated from Maryland State College (now University of Maryland Eastern Shore) with a degree in biology in 1965 and worked as a chemist with Publicker Industries in Philadelphia for two years. Between earning his M.S. (1970) and Ph.D. (1975) degrees in zoology at Oklahoma State University, he was drafted and served two years in the U.S. Army.

He taught biology at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and zoology at Howard University in Washington, DC, before arriving in Woods Hole in 1978 to work as a fisheries biologist at the Woods Hole Laboratory of NOAA's Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC). Jearld has conducted and published research and served as an administrator and manager, most recently serving as NEFSC Director of Academic Programs and as Director of the Woods Hole Partnership Education Program.

A strong advocate of NOAA's commitment to diversity and equity in employment, he devoted much of his career to fostering NOAA's goal of maintaining a workplace in which all people are respected as individuals and valued for their contributions. His work with NOAA, higher education institutions (especially Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other Minority Serving Institutions) has helped make oceanography and marine biology more accessible to a diverse body of students and research faculty.

"During his 38 years of government service, Ambrose Jearld's achievements as a scientist, manager, and leader are remarkable and exemplary. His lifelong dedication to diversity and inclusion deserves special recognition," said Bill Karp, NEFSC science and research director. "His tireless commitment to raising awareness and taking action to improve diversity and inclusion in the Woods Hole science community are evident through the Woods Hole Diversity Initiative and the Partnership Education Program."

"From a personal point of view, Ambrose has raised my awareness of the importance of diversity within the leadership of the Northeast Fisheries Science Center, and I know he has influenced many others in this way," Karp said. "Establishment of this lecture series is a fitting recognition of Ambrose's contributions."

Jearld has been honored by several organizations including the American Fisheries Society for his efforts at promoting demographic diversity in society, and for his leadership in the effort to bring diversity to the science community in general and the Woods Hole science community in particular. He is a charter member and former chair of the Woods Hole Black History Month Committee, and has served as a mentor in the MS PHD's program every year since its inception in 2003. He was designated a fellow in the inaugural class of the American Fisheries Society, and appointed to the Leadership Council of the American Geophysical Union, one of the largest scientific organizations in the world devoted to earth and space sciences with more than 62,000 members in 144 countries.

“When I first came to Woods Hole as President of the Sea Education Association (SEA) and noticed a startling lack of diversity, the first person I wanted to see was Ambrose Jearld,” said John Bullard, now Regional Administrator for NOAA Fisheries Greater Atlantic Region. “I wanted to know if the problem was just with SEA or whether it was all of Woods Hole. When Ambrose told me all of Woods Hole lacked diversity, we decided to invite all the scientific institutions to join an effort to promote and celebrate diversity. Out of this conversation, we formed the Woods Hole Diversity Initiative and the Diversity Advisory Committee, which Ambrose chaired. And out of these efforts came such programs as the Partnership Education Program (PEP), created by Ambrose and George Liles. No one has done more to promote diversity in Woods Hole than Ambrose Jearld. No one. Not even close.”

Active in the local community as a member of the St. Barnabas Memorial Episcopal Church, the NAACP and the Concerned Black Men of Cape Cod, Jearld serves on many boards and in many organizations, among them Massachusetts Maritime Academy and Sea Education Association. Beyond Cape Cod, he is engaged in diversity work and educational initiatives throughout the Commonwealth, and he collaborates with and is known and widely respected by educators at colleges and universities throughout the country.

Jearld is a member of the Epsilon Gamma Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. and numerous professional and technical scientific societies, including his new position as President of the National Technical Association (NTA). NTA, the oldest African American technical organization in the United States, was founded in 1926 to ensure that minorities, women and youth enter and excel in the fields of math, science, engineering and technology (STEM).

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Related links:

NEFSC Educational Opportunities and Internships: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/education/>

Woods Hole Diversity Initiative: <http://www.woodsholediversity.org/>

Partnership Education Program: <http://www.woodsholediversity.org/pep/about.html>

Ambrose Jearld Named to Inaugural Class of American Fisheries Society Fellows: <http://www.nefsc.noaa.gov/news/features/jearld-afs/>