

Adopt a Drifter Program

An educational ocean science program for schools, teachers, and students worldwide, led by NOAA

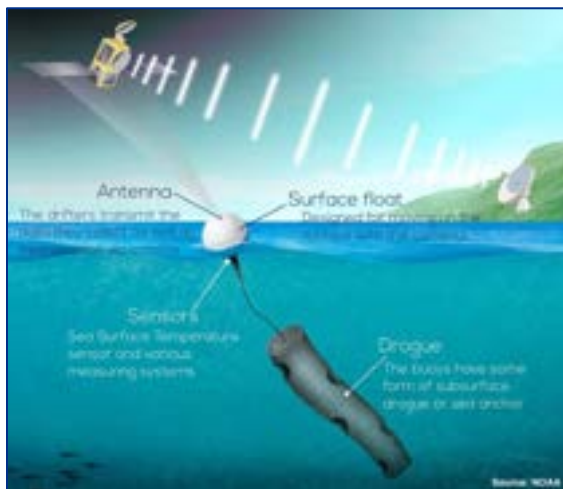


Overview

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) *Adopt a Drifter Program* was established in 2004 for K-16 educators and students from the United States and abroad. This FREE program provides teachers with an educational opportunity to infuse ocean observing system data into their curriculum.

Classrooms can participate by adopting one of over 1,100 drifters in the Global Drifter Array that NOAA maintains to monitor our global ocean. Teachers and students can track their drifter online as it follows ocean surface currents, using tracking charts to plot coordinates and determine their drifters direction and speed. Monitoring drifter data allows users to more easily make connections between ocean conditions, such as sea surface temperature, with other ocean and atmospheric processes, including circulation, waves, wind, and weather patterns.

Since 2004, the *Adopt a Drifter Program* has reached over 145 classrooms, connecting more than 3,600 students with NOAA data, and providing a real-life, interactive classroom experience to teach students about ocean science.



What is a Drifter?

Drifting buoys (drifters) are scientific instruments that sit at the ocean surface and are transported by near-surface ocean currents. A drifter is composed of a surface float and a drogue (sea anchor), which are connected by a long tether.

The surface float is equipped with a satellite transmitter and a thermistor to measure sea surface temperature; other possible sensors to measure oceanographic conditions include sea level pressure, sea surface salinity, and wave height.

The drogue allows the drifter to be pulled by near-surface currents, instead of being pushed by wind or surface waves.

Data from the drifters are transmitted in real-time via satellites to provide accurate information for weather forecasting, disaster relief, and scientific research.



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National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration

The Global Drifter Array is maintained by NOAA's Atlantic Oceanographic and Meteorological Laboratory and the Lagrangian Drifter Laboratory at Scripps Institute of Oceanography, funded by NOAA's Global Ocean Monitoring and Observing Program. Visit globalocean.noaa.gov and adp.noaa.gov to learn more.