**Dedicated NOAA/VIIRS Ocean Color Calibration/Validation Cruise: Cruise objectives and scope of observations.**

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The NOAA/STAR Ocean Color team is focused on “end-to-end” production of ocean color satellite products. In situ validation of satellite data is essential to producing the high-quality products required and expected by the international ocean color remote sensing community. In November 2014, a 10-day cruise aboard the NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster* in the western Atlantic along the US mid-east coast with the primary aim of in situ calibration and validation of the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS) instrument onboard the Suomi National Polar-orbiting Partnership (SNPP) satellite. This was the first NOAA dedicated VIIRS ocean color validation cruise supported through the NOAA Office of Marine and Air Operations. Collaborating groups included: Naval Research Laboratory; University of Southern Mississippi; City College of New York; University of Massachusetts at Boston; University of South Florida; University of Miami; Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University; the National Institute of Standards and Technology, NASA/Goddard Space Flight Center and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission. We present the scope of the observations of inherent and apparent optical properties made in support of the three primary objectives: 1) VIIRS ocean color validation; 2) uncertainty characterization of in situ ocean color measurements and 3) optical characterization of ocean variability. Cruise data will be reposited at NOAA CoastWatch/OceanWatch for convenient public access and will be archived as required by NOAA. A second dedicated VIIRS ocean color cruise is planned for late 2015 and additional NOAA ocean color cruises are anticipated for different regions in the future.

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