

## **NOAA's Aquarius Undersea Laboratory Media Guidelines**

Thank you for your interest in NOAA's Aquarius Undersea Laboratory, operated by the National Undersea Research Center at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. We are pleased to assist you in your efforts to report on our program and have designed this information package to give you important background on Aquarius and the unique conditions surrounding its operations. The most important advice we can give you regarding projects with our program is to plan in advance, talk to us early, and ask lots of questions. Our goal is to make sure every story we support is done professionally and efficiently.

### **Addressing Your Goals and Needs**

Project schedules and summaries are available on our website ([www.uncwil.edu/nurc/aquarius](http://www.uncwil.edu/nurc/aquarius)), as well as substantial background information about the program. To help us address your specific needs we require that you provide us with a written outline of what you would like to accomplish, proposing possible dates, crew size, and a summary of equipment that you would like to bring to the undersea laboratory. Please submit your outline at least six weeks prior to your intended visit on company letterhead including the names of those visiting, the program name or publication, and if possible, the projected date of publication or airtime. Rarely, we can accommodate requests without substantial advance notice and planning.

### **Options for Acquiring Underwater Photos or Video Footage**

Because Aquarius is located underwater, it is often difficult or impossible to provide people with direct access to the facility, due to operational or weather constraints. For properly accredited media, NURC/UNCW can provide high-resolution digital photos or video footage (some in Betacam, most is MiniDV) of the program and facilities. In some cases, Aquarius staff may be able to assist in shooting additional digital still or video footage, or a professional cameraman may be recommended. Access to Aquarius is also constrained by the work schedule of the scientists and operations staff.

### **Scuba Certification Required for All Underwater Visitors**

On those occasions when access to Aquarius can be provided, scuba certification is required for any candidate visitor. Candidates will be asked to provide proof of certification and diving proficiency (a minimum of 25 scuba dives logged) before arrangements can be made to visit the undersea lab. Waivers and other paperwork can be provided for review prior to your arrival (also available on-line).

### **Equipment Requirements and Transportation to Aquarius**

Certified scuba divers approved for visiting Aquarius are responsible for supplying their own personal diving equipment. Depending on the length of your stay, NURC/UNCW can provide basic dive gear including tanks, BCs, regulators, and weights. Boat transportation to Aquarius is provided on a limited basis at no cost, but space is limited so visitors are asked to

restrict their personal possessions to one medium-sized bag each, in addition to whatever camera or audio equipment is needed. Crew sizes are restricted to a total of two persons inside Aquarius.

### **Taking Equipment into Aquarius**

All equipment that is to be taken into Aquarius must fit within specially designed transfer pots, the largest of which is about the size of a standard 5 gallon bucket. Aquarius has two Lowell video lights with stands and gels that are available under certain circumstances. Due to the limited space and power inside Aquarius it is important that we discuss, well in advance, all equipment needs. NURC/UNCW takes no responsibility for damaged equipment due to the unique aspects of working under pressure in Aquarius. To date, we have successfully worked with multiple camera types (Beta Cameras need to be broken down to fit into the transfer pots) and sound equipment inside Aquarius, without problems. Transfer pots are used routinely to move sensitive equipment through the water column, but there are no guarantees.