An environmental oceanographer who has published more than 100 scientific articles on the global carbon cycle and was among the first to publish scientific data about ocean acidification has been chosen to be the director of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) laboratory known for studying ocean physics and chemistry, innovative research in tsunamis, and underwater volcanoes.

Christopher Sabine, PhD will become the third director of NOAA’s Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory (PMEL) in Seattle, Washington on 20 November.

"Dr Sabine brings that unique combination of an excellent scientific background and superior leadership skills essential for the director of this laboratory,” said Craig McLean, acting assistant administrator for NOAA’s Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research. “The lab has a long history of innovative research that serves society every day and it will continue to flourish under Dr Sabine’s leadership.”

Sabine has been at PMEL since 1999 and became a supervisory oceanographer in 2008. His work concentrates on the global carbon cycle and in 2004 he was one of the lead authors of a pair of papers published in Science using direct measurements to quantify the accumulation of human-derived carbon dioxide in the ocean and its impact on marine ecosystems.

His work, along with that of another PMEL oceanographer, Richard Feely, PhD, helped shape the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring Act that was passed in March 2009.

"I am honoured to have this opportunity to help guide and facilitate NOAA’s ocean research,” said Sabine. “In particular, I am excited to work with some of the world’s most
preeminent scientists to better understand how the ocean affects our daily lives and how humans can affect the ocean.”

Since 2004, Sabine has been a senior fellow at the University of Washington Joint Institute for the Study of Atmosphere and Ocean and an affiliate full professor at the University of Washington. Before coming to PMEL, he was on the research staff of Princeton University, a research associate at the University of Hawaii, and a research technician at the University of Texas Medical Branch.

He has been recognized by NOAA five times with Outstanding Scientific Paper Awards and in 2006 received the Department of Commerce Gold Medal for pioneering research leading to the discovery of increased acidification in the world’s oceans due to the absorption of carbon dioxide.

Among his many awards, Sabine received the NOAA Research Employee of the Year Award for Leadership in 2009 and in 2010 he received the Seattle Federal Executive Board’s Public Service Award.

He serves on many national and international scientific committees and received special recognition from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change for his role in helping the IPCC win the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize shared with Al Gore. He is a coordinating lead author on the IPCC fifth assessment report chapter on “Carbon and Biogeochemical Cycles.”

Sabine holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Texas A&M University (1986) with a major in marine science and a doctorate in oceanography from the University of Hawaii-Manoa (1992).

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