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June 12, 2000, Monday, BC cycle

SECTION: Washington Dateline

LENGTH: 370 words

HEADLINE: **Clinton** announces three new undersea explorations

BYLINE: By ANNE GEARAN, Associated Press Writer

DATELINE: WASHINGTON

BODY:

Video screens displayed fantastical pictures of otherworldly landscapes below the waves and beyond the sun Monday as President **Clinton** and first lady Hillary Rodham **Clinton** hosted the latest in a series of White House lectures on science, arts and letters.

Monday's session on **space** and sea exploration featured gee-whiz science demonstrations and scientists' musings on what future explorations might yield. Schoolchildren asked questions in person and over the Internet.

"We must continue as a nation to set out for new frontiers, whether under the sea or into the heavens," **Clinton** said at the start of the 90-minute session. "We must continue to try to conquer the seemingly impossible, to discover the unimaginable, to find out more about what's out there, and in the process about ourselves and what's here."

Clinton announced federal participation in three new undersea exploration projects: A deep-water canyon off the coasts of New York and New Jersey; reefs deep beneath the Gulf of Mexico off Florida's Gulf Coast; and an ocean mountain range off California.

He also directed the Commerce Department to form an advisory panel of scientists to recommend priorities and goals for new ocean exploration. A report is due in four months.

Although oceans cover some 70 percent of the Earth's surface, scientists estimate that 90 percent of that **space** remains unknown to humans. **Clinton** and scientists predicted Monday that some of the organisms found in those depths might one day provide medical cures or lessons for industry and human development.

Pictures of those creatures - brightly colored tube worms that live near undersea volcanoes and diaphanous scribbles floating in the deep - flashed on the eight thin, high-tech screens set against the gilded splendor of the White House East Room.

Clinton fidgeted at times but also looked amazed as two prominent scientists, undersea explorer Marcia McNutt of California's Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute and Neil de Grasse Tyson of the Hayden Planetarium in New York City, traded what-ifs about the future.

The lecture was the ninth of a program conceived by Mrs. **Clinton** as part of the White House **millennium** year commemoration.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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June 13, 2000, Tuesday, Final Edition

SECTION: A SECTION; Pg. A25

LENGTH: 467 words

HEADLINE: Ocean Research Projects Will Explore Deep-Sea Life on 3 Coasts

BODY:

Giant worms 250 years old, life-spouting volcanic vents and secrets to the origins of life on Earth will be the subjects of three new voyages to the bottom of the seas off California, New York and Florida, President **Clinton** said yesterday.

Clinton announced a "new era of ocean exploration" at a White House **Millennium** Council event, the ninth in a series of lectures and cultural programs that highlight American creativity and inventiveness.

"More than 95 percent of the underwater world remains unknown and unseen," **Clinton** said. "And what remains to be explored could hold clues to the origins of life on Earth, to links to our maritime history, to cures for diseases."

The voyages will be led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration along with marine research institutions and universities.

Researchers will explore the Hudson Canyon off the New York-New Jersey coast, deep reefs and sea floor vents off the Gulf Coast of Florida and the Davidson Seamount off central California.

Clinton also directed the Commerce Department to convene a panel of leading ocean explorers, educators and scientists to develop recommendations for a national oceans exploration strategy. Commerce is to report back in four months.

The Davidson Seamount is about 80 miles southwest of Monterey, Calif. The 30-mile-long seamount, which rises 9,000 feet from the ocean floor, has rock surfaces that are home to a variety of unusual deep-sea animals, including large, dense patches of sponges and old coral forests.

The Hudson River Canyon lies about 100 miles southeast of New York, the most predominant underwater feature on the eastern seaboard, comparable to Arizona's Grand Canyon, only larger. It is said to be home to many economically and ecologically valuable species.

Deep in the Gulf of Mexico off the Florida coast, far below the reach of sunlight, are reefs and vents with dense thickets of giant worms and mussel beds. Thick mats of bacteria thrive on chemicals venting, seeping and oozing from the ocean floor.

Clinton said this area includes "some of the oldest life forms on Earth: giant tooth worms . . . up to 250 years old."

Funding for the projects is already included in the federal budget, the White House said.

The gathering of distinguished scientists heard from Marcia McNutt, a geophysicist who has made 14 ocean expeditions, and astrophysicist Neil de Grasse Tyson, who lectured on **space** research.

McNutt said the federal government's funding of ocean studies is only a tenth of that for the **space** program and called for equal treatment.

Clinton said Congress is fixated on life-extending biomedical research and allocates much money toward it rather than oceans, which he said could also lead to important breakthroughs for saving lives.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

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