

Beaufort Gyre Exploration Project: Dispatch 34: Last ITP deployment

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This morning was the last instrument deployment day for the WHOI group. ITP 62 was the second over-the-side deployment of this cruise, and two up-tempo buoys were also deployed today. Although no ice was in sight our data indicated that we were within range of the ice field and an open water ITP deployment was plausible. Just after breakfast the crew began moving the needed items forward: the spool and wire for that unit, anchor, foam, surface package, and tools were all brought to the foredeck and prepared for deployment. Mike DeGrandpre and I carried the profiler forward while Jim Dunn and Kris Newhall set up the winch system. Once everything was set up the bridge was contacted for final clearance and the deployment operation was begun. The first step was to run the bottom end of the 790 meter mooring wire through the hanging block then attach it to the 250 lb. anchor. Then the profiler is brought to the work area and attached to the wire. This whole unit is then raised up to stand the profiler upright, the A-frame is swung out and the anchor/profiler/wire is lowered into the water. After 20 or 30 minutes of slowly paying out the upper end of the wire is reached and the surface package is attached. There are communication cables and a grounding plate that have to go onto the upper end of the wire along with the large surface float and slip bale. Once all that is in place it is connected to a release then hung from the crane where Ed Bridgeman is standing by. He lowers the entire unit - surface package and foam, 790 meter wire, anchor, and profiler - gently down to the surface of the water just enough for the grounding plate to be submerged.

A final comm check is done once the unit is complete. We expected no problems but today we had a failure. A couple of things were tried but no luck. I had one last trick up my sleeve and we finally got confirmation that everything is working. Whew!

The folks aboard have also been hard at work decorating foam cups to be sent down on the CTD. It's pretty simple - take a standard 4" coffee cup, put it in some sort of bag, and attach it to the CTD. With deeper casts the result is the foam cup turns into something the size of a thimble. What makes it fun is to decorate them before they go and conference room turned into what looked like my mom's kitchen a few days before Easter. There were dozens of cups decorated every which way; some of the artistry is really impressive! The trick is to remember to make the drawings and writing big because the cup will come back about 1/4 its original size.

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