



Owned by NOAA and managed by the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW), the AQUARIUS habitat is an 82-ton double-lock pressure vessel approximately 14 meters long by 4 meters in diameter.

### **NCRI research assistants visit the Aquarius**

Five NSU Oceanographic Center / National Coral Reef Institute (NCRI) research assistants and graduate students had the opportunity to dive and visit AQUARIUS, the world's only undersea laboratory located 20 meters beneath the surface. The dive was led by Otto Rutten, Associate Center Director of NURC/UNCW. Other dive participants included Dr. Mark Monaco, NOAA NOS CCMA, Dr. Mike Dowgiallo, NOAA NOS CSCOR Program Manager, and Dr. Felix Martinez, NOAA NOS CSCOR.



NCRI Research Assistants and Graduate Students (left to right) Jamie Monty, Adrienne Carter, Lauren Shuman, Luz Raquel Hernández-Cruz, and Joanna Walczak in front of the AQUARIUS Life Support Buoy located 4.5km off of Key Largo. The Life Support Buoy is linked to AQUARIUS by a 45 meter long umbilical that supplies air, power, and communication cables.

Originally conceived by NOAA's Undersea Research Program (NURP), AQUARIUS was built in 1986 and has supported over 70 missions involving more than 250 scientists from the U.S. and other countries. With sophisticated research capabilities and comfortable living quarters, AQUARIUS allows "aquanauts" to explore and investigate an environment hostile to human habitation. Underwater research that would normally take months to complete from the surface can be accomplished in ten days from AQUARIUS.