***For Immediate Release***
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# University of Wisconsin-Madison, City of Port Washington unveil groundbreaking real-time rip-current identification technology

**PORT WASHINGTON, WI:** The City of Port Washington, in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute, Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, and the NOAA Coastal Storms Program, has formally unveiled to the public a groundbreaking real-time rip-current identification technology. The development of the online technology, titled "**I**ntegrated **N**owcast/**F**orecast **O**peration **S**ystem" (**INFOS**), was led forward by Dr. Chin Wu, Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Director of the Environmental/Ecological Fluid Mechanics and Coastal Sustainability Lab at UW-Madison.

The partnership among the groups dates back to September 2012. That year on Labor Day weekend, the City of Port Washington lost one of its own, 15 year-old Tyler Buczek, to rip currents off of North Beach. Subsequent to this tragedy, the City, under the leadership of Mayor Tom Mlada, formed a Waterfront Safety Team to identify ways to make the lakefront in Port Washington as safe as possible and secure funding to implement them. Dr. Wu and his team, focused at the time on bluff stability along Wisconsin's shoreline, recognized a very significant way they could partner on the city's Waterfront Safety efforts through rip current identification – and INFOS Port Washington was unofficially born.

The INFOS technology serves to capture essential near-shore water information, such as data related to waves and currents, and uses that information to identify potential rip current development and communicate those public safety concerns to beach visitors. With roughly 40% of the deaths in the Great Lakes over the past 10 years attributable to rip currents, development of an effective, real-time warning system became a high priority and personal mission for Dr. Wu.

"Our goal was to create a usable technology – a functional public website – that would provide modeling results and combine those models with real-time, high-integrity data," Dr. Wu said. "Through utilization of a wave sensor (buoy) and a webcam, we are able to develop high-resolution imagery the public can view and use as a guide in monitoring beach safety."

"Our community embraced this as a unique opportunity to not only take an active role in planning and implementing our own water safety initiatives, but to help take the lead on a statewide and regional basis as well," Mayor Mlada said. "When Dr. Wu proposed the concept for INFOS, it was very clear to us that this technology could be difference-making – and indeed, thanks to the inspired vision and generous contributions of Dr. Wu and his team and our partners with NOAA Coastal Storms Program, the Sea Grant Institute and Wisconsin Coastal Management Program, our community now has an online rip current awareness/warning system for our public beaches that empowers recreational users and engages them in managing risk and maximizing safety."

Dr. Wu and his team (Miss Yuli Liu and Miss Prashansa Shrivastava Pranshasa) were also quick to credit the vital financial support from NOAA Coastal Storms Program and collaborators Mr. Gene Clark, from the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute, and Mr. Todd Breiby, from Wisconsin Coastal Management Program.

"This was a project made possible by generous funding from those Programs, as well as invaluable contributions of time and talent from staff members of both Programs and the City of Port Washington," Dr. Wu said. "It was a true team effort from the beginning and the end outcome is a first-of-its-kind technology that the City of Port Washington can proudly and confidently employ in advancing its ongoing water safety efforts."

INFOS Port Washington can be found at: **http://infosportwashington.cee.wisc.edu/**

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