

Formal comments given by Aqua Project Scientist Claire L. Parkinson at the Pecora Awards ceremony, 10/26/22, accepting the 2022 William T. Pecora Group Award on behalf of the Aqua mission, following the introduction by Karen St. Germain, the Earth Science Division Director at NASA Headquarters:

Thank you Karen.

I am pleased to accept the William T. Pecora Award on behalf of the Aqua mission. This is a mission that has followed in the footsteps of William Pecora's influential role in the early establishment of a strong U.S. program of Earth observations from space. It is now 20 years since the May 4, 2002 launch of the Aqua satellite, and during those 20 years, Aqua has orbited the Earth well over 100,000 times and has collected data that have been used in over 20,000 scientific publications and in numerous practical applications. Aqua data have provided vast amounts of information about water throughout the Earth system, including water in its liquid, solid, and gaseous forms, and it has also provided vast amounts of information about the chemical composition of the atmosphere, aerosols in the atmosphere, and vegetation on the land and in the oceans. The Aqua data have quantified increases in such greenhouse gases as carbon dioxide and methane, increases in atmospheric temperatures, decreases in sea ice coverage, and decreases in carbon monoxide pollution; they have shown the cold wake in the ocean after a hurricane passes over and the gravity waves propagating around the globe following a major volcanic eruption; they have improved weather forecasting and have been used to monitor forest fires, dust storms, volcanic ash plumes, oil spills, sea ice, icebergs, hurricanes, and even crop yields. These many and diverse accomplishments could not have happened without the work of hundreds of people, key among them being the Project Managers Marty Donohoe, George Morrow, and Phil Sabelhaus, managing the development of the spacecraft and instruments prior to launch, and the Mission Director Bill Guit, heading the mission operations controlling the Aqua spacecraft after launch, plus the science team leaders, Project Scientist, Program Scientists, and Deputy Project Scientists, as listed on the slide. I have been the Aqua Project Scientist since May of 1993, 9 years before launch, and will now be retiring at the end of December. It has been an enormous amount of work, but such a privilege to be able to contribute to a mission that has done so much and to be able to do it as a part of NASA. On behalf of everyone involved in the Aqua mission, I thank the William T. Pecora Award staff, the nominator, all those who wrote letters supporting the nomination, and the awards committee. Standing with me in accepting this award are the two Aqua science team leaders who are attending the Pecora conference this year: Vince Salomonson, who is one of the original Aqua science team leaders, and Miguel Roman, who is the most recently appointed science team leader. I wish the other eight science team leaders and everyone else on the list behind me could be here as well, and I hope that each of them will be receiving equivalent certificates to those that Vince and Miguel and I are receiving. The Aqua Outreach Coordinator Steve Graham is in the audience, and I'd like him to stand. I'd also like anyone else who has had any role in the Aqua mission, including as an engineer, a programmer, a data archivist, a user of the Aqua data or any other role, to please stand so that you too can be acknowledged as a part of the team that has made the Aqua mission the success that it has become. Thank you.