Dr. John Sample

Superintendent, Ocean Sciences Division
Naval Research Laboratory

Dr. John T. Sample is the Superintendent of the Ocean Sciences Division at the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory (NRL), where he directs a team of 200 scientists, engineers, technicians, and supporting employees engaged in an Ocean Sciences research portfolio including basic and applied research leading to transition of science and technology to Navy and Marine Corps activities. This includes oceanography and geophysical sciences and the use of theoretical, numerical, data assimilation, in situ, and remote sensing approaches.

Research and development efforts include nowcasting/forecasting systems, associated database management and visual information systems, in situ and remote sensors for obtaining data, efficient high-performance computing, and quantifying the effect of the ocean environment on sensors and systems important to the U.S. Navy, the DoD and other agencies. He leads all personnel and facilities aspects of this program with an annual budget more than $60 million.

Dr. Sample is also head of the Office of Research Support Services, which directs and maintains the NRL Campus at Stennis Space Center, MS, including 120,000 square feet of office and laboratory space as well as classified and unclassified networks. He joined NRL in 1997 as a student intern in the Digital Mapping Section. In 2009, he became head of the Geospatial Computing Section and, later, director of NRL’s Center for Geospatial Sciences, holding an Advanced Research Scientist and Engineer (ARSAE) position at NRL. Dr. Sample was appointed Superintendent of the Ocean Sciences Division and entered the Senior Executive Service in August 2023.

Dr. Sample holds a bachelor’s degree in mathematics from the University of Southern Mississippi and a Ph.D. in computer science from Louisiana State University. He has authored more than 80 technical papers including 23 U.S. patents. Dr. Sample authored Tile-Based GIS, the fundamental book in the field of tile-based geospatial data management systems.

He is the creator of the NRL Tile Server, an infrastructure-grade data dissemination system operationally used by multiple DoD agencies and commands and deployed to multiple overseas commands, flight and at-sea platforms. Dr. Sample’s patents include new fixed-length index techniques for geospatial data, and a compression system for meteorological and oceanographic data to support transfer of numerical ocean models to bandwidth-challenged Navy platforms.

He was recognized with a Delores M. Etter Top Navy Scientists and Engineers Award in 2008. He has received four NRL Alan Berman Research Publication Awards and two Technology Transfer Awards in addition to letters of recognition from Special Forces Command Baghdad (2003), the Columbia Accident Investigation Board (2003), and the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency (2012).