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Inventor(s)

Kleinigger; Michael R. et al.

TOPSIDE BUOY SYSTEM

Abstract

A topside buoy system is disclosed for relaying a status of a diver between a monitoring station and a diver's wearable device and scuba tank pod. The communication may be carried by sonar signals underwater and may be transmitted by short-range communication methods through air. An application on the command station may display diver status information and may receive and transmit messages between the command station and the wearable device of the diver via the topside buoy. The diver location data may be determined relative to the topside buoy by determining a time delay of the sonar signal between the wearable device and the topside buoy, by a plurality of transducers configured to detect an angle from which the sonar signal originated, and a depth of the diver included in the sonar signal.

Inventors: Kleinigger; Michael R. (Fuquay Varina, NC), Danko; Patrick M. (Overland Park, KS), Collins; Paul Benjamin H. (Venice, CA), Koszarsky; Christopher R. (Cary, NC), Classen; Samantha E. (Durham, NC), Snesev; Victor N. (Cary, NC), Kim; Young-Hoon (Raleigh, NC), Kachur; Christopher M. (Raleigh, NC), Corbett; James E. (Cary, NC)

Applicant: Garmin International, Inc. (Olathe, KS)

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Background/Summary

RELATED APPLICATION [0001] The present application is a continuation of, and claims the priority benefit to, U.S. patent application Ser. No. 17/644,509, filed Dec. 15, 2021, and entitled “TOPSIDE BUOY SYSTEM.” The above-identified application is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Some wearable devices for monitoring underwater divers obtain information regarding the status of the divers and their dive equipment. The information typically is stored on a device worn by a diver which may provide alerts to the diver as to the status of the breathable gas and the time that the diver has been underwater. Furthermore, the information may provide a depth of the diver. Some topside systems allow the diver wearable device to communicate with the surface via a cable or tether.

SUMMARY

[0003] Embodiments of the present disclosure provide systems for monitoring the status of an underwater diver and relaying the status information to remote monitoring stations via a topside buoy. Various embodiments provide a topside system for monitoring a status of a diver. The topside system comprises one or more transducers for receiving a first sonar signal from a wearable device of the diver, wherein the first sonar signal comprises dive data, wherein the dive data is indicative of a depth of the diver, and a transceiver configured to transmit to and receive from a water surface topside monitoring station, wherein the transceiver receives instructions from the topside monitoring station, and wherein the one or more transducers transmit a second sonar signal indicative of the instructions to the wearable device.

[0004] This summary is provided to introduce a selection of concepts in a simplified form that are further described below in the detailed description. This summary is not intended to identify key features or essential features of the claimed subject matter, nor is it intended to be used to limit the scope of the claimed subject matter. Other aspects and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following detailed description of the embodiments and the accompanying drawing figures.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING FIGURES

[0005] Embodiments of the invention are described in detail below with reference to the attached drawing figures, wherein:

[0006] FIG. 1 depicts an exemplary environment for employing a topside system;

[0007] FIG. 2 depicts exemplary hardware of a scuba tank pod;

[0008] FIG. 3 depicts exemplary hardware of a wearable electronic device;

[0009] FIG. 4A depicts an exemplary topside buoy;

[0010] FIG. 4B depicts exemplary hardware of the topside buoy of FIG. 4A;

[0011] FIG. 5 depicts an exemplary dive status interface;

[0012] FIG. 6 depicts an exemplary dive analytics interface;
[0013] FIG. 7 depicts an exemplary transducer roll cage; and
[0014] FIG. 8 depicts an exemplary method of monitoring the status of the diver by the topside system.

[0015] The drawing figures do not limit the invention to the specific embodiments disclosed and described herein. The drawings are not necessarily to scale, emphasis instead being placed upon clearly illustrating the principles of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0016] The following detailed description references the accompanying drawings that illustrate specific embodiments in which the invention can be practiced. The embodiments are intended to describe aspects of the invention in sufficient detail to enable those skilled in the art to practice the invention. Other embodiments can be utilized, and changes can be made without departing from the scope of the invention. The following detailed description is, therefore, not to be taken in a limiting sense. The scope of the invention is defined only by the appended claims, along with the full scope of equivalents to which such claims are entitled.

[0017] In this description, references to “one embodiment,” “an embodiment,” or “embodiments” mean that the feature or features being referred to are included in at least one embodiment of the technology. Separate references to “one embodiment,” “an embodiment,” or “embodiments” in this description do not necessarily refer to the same embodiment and are also not mutually exclusive unless so stated and/or except as will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art from the description. For example, a feature, structure, act, etc. described in one embodiment may also be included in other embodiments but is not necessarily included. Thus, the technology can include a variety of combinations and/or integrations of the embodiments described herein.

[0018] In general, embodiments of the present disclosure are directed to a system for monitoring the status of a diver underwater. The diver may wear a self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (scuba). In some embodiments, the diver status monitoring system may comprise a scuba tank pod for detecting gas pressure in the scuba tank, a wearable device worn on the diver in communication with the scuba tank pod and that provides information to and receives input from the diver, and a topside buoy for communicating with the scuba tank pod, the wearable device, and a remote and communication station. In some embodiments, the location and the status of the diver may be determined and transmitted by the topside buoy. The topside buoy may receive and store any communications and relay the communications to the remote monitoring station. The diver may interface with the wearable device to send communications to the topside buoy and on to the remote monitoring station. The remote monitoring station may map the location of the diver-to-diver environment data comprising any targets for the diver and obstacles that may be present in the dive environment. Furthermore, transmissions from the remote monitoring station may be received at the topside buoy and relayed to the wearable device providing instructions to the diver. In some embodiments, the transmissions from the remote monitoring station may be in the form of text messages.

[0019] FIG. 1 depicts an exemplary dive scenario **100** where diver **102** is underwater with scuba tank pod **104** and wearable device **106** in communication with topside buoy **108** which is also in communication with topside monitoring station **110** held by topside monitoring station user **112** on boat **114**. In some embodiments, topside monitoring station **110** may be a mobile device (as shown) or may be any computing device as described in embodiments below. In some embodiments, scuba tank pod **104** may be in fluid communication with the gas of scuba tank **116** and measure a pressure of the gas in scuba tank **116**. In some embodiments, scuba tank pod **104** may also detect water pressure at depth and store the water pressure data. Scuba tank pod **104** may store the gas pressure and the water pressure and send a signal indicative of the gas pressure and the water pressure to wearable device **106** or to the Topside Buoy **108** by sonar. In some embodiments, wearable device **106** may receive the sonar signal and process the signal to notify diver **102** of the

remaining gas and depth data. Diver **102** may also be notified of a time remaining before the gas runs out. Any alerts may be provided to any senses of diver **102** to notify diver **102** of any immediate danger based on the received data. Exemplary dive scenario **100** is discussed in more detail below.

[0020] FIG. 2 depicts exemplary scuba tank pod hardware components **200** of scuba tank pod **104**. In some embodiments, scuba tank pod **104** may be connected to a pressure port of scuba tank **116** and may detect the gas pressure in scuba tank **116**. In some embodiments, scuba tank pod **104** comprises pod pressure detector **202**, pod processor **204**, pod transducer **208**, and pod memory **210**. Pod pressure detector **202** may be coupled to scuba tank **116** and detect the gas pressure in scuba tank **116**. Pod pressure detector **202** may be connected to a pressure port, a respirator line, or the respirator. The gas pressure in scuba tank **116** may provide valuable information such as, how much breathable gas remains and, thus, how long diver **102** may remain underwater. Pod pressure detector **202** may detect the gas pressure continuously or intermittently. Pod pressure detector **202** may transmit a signal indicative of the gas pressure to pod processor **204** and pod memory **210**.

[0021] In some embodiments, scuba tank pod **104** may also comprise a water pressure sensor for detecting the water pressure at scuba tank **116**. The water pressure may be indicative of a depth of diver **102**. As such, the depth of diver **102** may be known based on the water pressure detected at scuba tank pod **104**. The detected water pressure and/or depth data may be transmitted to wearable device **106** by sonar signal generated by pod transducer **208**.

[0022] In some embodiments, pod memory **210** may be a stand-alone memory or included with pod processor **204**. In general, all computing system described herein may store computer-readable media storing computer-executable instructions executable by any processor described herein. Computer-readable media may include both volatile and nonvolatile media, removable and nonremovable media, and media readable by a database. For example, computer-readable media include (but are not limited to) RAM, ROM, EEPROM, flash memory or other memory technology, CD-ROM, digital versatile discs (DVD), holographic media or other optical disc storage, magnetic cassettes, magnetic tape, magnetic disk storage, and other magnetic storage devices. These technologies can store data temporarily or permanently. However, unless explicitly specified otherwise, the term “computer-readable media” should not be construed to include physical, but transitory, forms of signal transmission such as radio broadcasts, electrical signals through a wire, or light pulses through a fiber-optic cable. Examples of stored information include computer-useable instructions, data structures, program modules, and other data representations. Computing devices may be included on scuba tank pod **104**, wearable device **106**, topside buoy **108**, and topside monitoring station **110**.

[0023] Generally, in embodiments described herein, any transducer described herein may convert electrical energy to mechanical energy and vice versa. Transducers may receive sound, or sonar, signals through a medium such as, in this case, water and convert the sonar signal to an electrical signal. Furthermore, the transducers described herein may receive electrical signals and generate mechanical signals such as sonar signals. For example, pod transducer **208** may receive an electrical signal indicative of the gas pressure from any component of scuba tank pod **104** generated at pod pressure detector **202** and send a sonar signal indicative of the gas pressure to wearable device **106**. The signal transmitted from scuba tank pod **104** to wearable device **106** may be sonar waves such as, for example, pressure, acoustical, mechanical, and/or vibrational waves that are indicative of the gas pressure in scuba tank **116**. In some embodiments, wearable device **106** and topside buoy **108** also comprise transducers.

[0024] FIG. 3 depicts wearable device hardware components **300** of wearable device **106**. In some embodiments, wearable device **106** may comprise wearable device display **302**, wearable device user interface **304**, wearable device transceiver **306**, location determining element **308**, wearable device processor **310**, wearable device memory **312**, wearable device transducer **314** and biometric element **316**. Wearable device **106** may comprise the computing components as described above

for storing non-transitory computer-readable media and executing computer-executable instructions. Wearable device display **302** may comprise any typical display for mobile and small electronic devices. In some embodiments, wearable device display may be a touchscreen configured to receive input by diver **102**. Furthermore, wearable device **106** may comprise buttons, switches, knobs, and any other input components for receiving input from diver **102** and generating electrical signals that may be interpreted by wearable device processor **310**.

[0025] Wearable device **106** may further comprise wearable device user interface **304**. Wearable device user interface **304** may provide for interaction with diver **102** by the above-described methods. Wearable device user interface **304** may provide instructions to diver **102** in the form of text message, maps, arrows, directions, and any other method. In some embodiments, wearable device user interface **304** may provide dive data and analytics as shown in FIGS. 5 and 6 and described in detail below.

[0026] In some embodiments, wearable device **106** may comprise wearable device transceiver **306**. Wearable device transceiver **306** may compare any short-range communication such as, WiFi, BLUETOOTH, radio frequency (RF) communication, or the like. In some embodiments, the communication may be 4G, 5G, or satellite communication. Wearable device transceiver **306** may communicate with any status monitoring system components described herein.

[0027] In some embodiments, wearable device **106** comprises location determining element **308**. Location determining element **308** may be any sensor and/or instructions for determining the location of wearable device **106**. Location determining element **308** may process signals from satellites, beacons, and nearby reference stations, to determine a location of wearable device **106**. Location determining element may be any global positioning system GPS or a transducer for communicating underwater as described above. Location determining element may determine the geographic location of wearable device **106** or a relative location based on communications from beacons and/or nearby reference stations. A geographic location may be determined based on the geographic location of the beacons and/or nearby reference stations. In some embodiments, the nearby reference stations may be topside monitoring station **110**. Location determining element **308** may additionally or alternatively include a 3D digital magnetic compass and/or other internal navigational components for determining orientation and position.

[0028] In some embodiments, wearable device **106** may comprise biometric element **316**. Biometric element **316** may comprise sensors for detecting any biometrics of diver **102** such as, for example, respiration, pulse oxygen, heart rate, core temperature, and the like. Biometric element **316** may detect and track the biometric data to monitor the status of diver **102**. The biometric data may be transmitted along with data collected by scuba tank pod **104** and any other data collected by wearable device **106** as dive data to topside buoy **108**. The dive data may comprise any gas pressure, water pressure, depth, biometric, and location data and may be transmitted by wearable device transducer **314** to topside buoy **108**.

[0029] In some embodiments, a water pressure detector may be used for determining depth. In some embodiments, the water pressure detector may be disposed on scuba tank pod **104** or wearable device **106**. The water pressure detector may measure the pressure of the water at depth and send a signal indicative of the pressure and, thus, the depth of diver **102**. The signal may be included in the sonar signal and may be sent to the wearable device **106** and topside buoy **108**. Furthermore, wearable device **106** may transmit a similar signal to topside buoy **108** indicative of the water pressure and the depth of diver **102**. Topside buoy **108** may determine the depth from the received pressure or may receive the depth information directly from wearable device **106**. Topside buoy **108** may then relay any data including the pressure and depth data to topside monitoring station **110**. Wearable device **106** and scuba tank pod **104** are described in detail in U.S. Pat. No. 10,611,445, filed Sep. 19, 2018, and entitled "WEARABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICE FOR DETECTING DIVER RESPIRATION," which is incorporated by reference herein in its entirety.

[0030] FIG. 4A depicts topside buoy **108**. In some embodiments, topside buoy **108** comprises

housing **402**. Housing **402** may provide a durable shell that is also waterproof or water resistant. Housing may be made of plastic or a composite material that allows for any signal described herein to pass unimpeded. Housing **402** may also be lightweight such that topside buoy **108** may be transported by hand. Topside buoy **108** may also be buoyant such that topside buoy **108** floats and keeps water away from electronic components.

[0031] In some embodiments, topside buoy **108** may comprise topside buoy hardware components **404** depicted in FIG. 4B. Topside buoy hardware components **404** may include buoy transceiver **406**, buoy memory element **408**, buoy processing element **410**, buoy location determining element **412**, buoy transducer element **414**, and any general hardware components that may be necessary in embodiments described herein. In some embodiments, topside buoy **108** may float above diver **102** and may be configured to receive data from diver **102** and topside monitoring station **110**.

Furthermore, topside buoy **108** may transmit data to diver **102** and topside monitoring station **110**. In some embodiments, any data obtained and collected at topside buoy **108**, may be processed and stored at topside buoy **108**, and processed at topside buoy **108** before transmitting to diver **102** and topside monitoring station **110**. In some embodiments, the combination of topside buoy **108** and topside monitoring station **110** are generally referenced as topside monitoring system.

[0032] FIG. 4B depicts the exemplary hardware components for embodiments described herein. In some embodiments, topside buoy **108** comprises buoy transducer element **414**. In some embodiments, buoy transducer element **414** may be the same or similar to the transducers described above. Buoy transducer element **414** may receive sonar signals from scuba tank pod **104** and wearable device **106** and generate electrical signals based on the sonar signal. The electrical signals may be indicative of the data sent from scuba tank pod **104** and wearable device **106**. The electrical signals may be processed by buoy processing element **410** and stored and transmitted to topside monitoring station **110**, wearable device **106**, and scuba tank pod **104**.

[0033] In some embodiments, topside buoy **108** comprises buoy memory element **408**. Buoy memory element **408** may function to store any data obtained by and sensors and processed by buoy processing element **410**. Furthermore, as described above, buoy memory element **408** may comprise computer-readable media storing computer-executable instructions that, when executed by buoy processing element **410**, perform the processes described herein.

[0034] In some embodiments, topside buoy **108** comprises buoy transceiver **406**. Buoy transceiver **406** may comprise a transmitter and receiver for communicating by transmitting wireless signals to the topside monitoring station **110**. The wireless signals may be transmitted by radio frequency at any frequency or by any other long or short-range communication signal. In some embodiments, topside buoy **108** and topside monitoring station **110** may be in communication on a local-area network. In some embodiments, buoy transceiver **406** may communicate on a local-area network such as WiFi and topside monitoring station **110** may be any computer, mobile device, tablet, or any other computing element that may execute an application as described in reference to FIG. 5 and FIG. 6 below. As described in detail below, data, including messages, may be transmitted between wearable device **106** and topside monitoring station **110** via topside buoy **108**.

Confirmation of receipt of the transferred data may also be transmitted upon receipt of the transferred data by wearable device **106**, topside buoy **108**, and topside monitoring station **110**.

[0035] In some embodiments, buoy transceiver **406** may be any element configured for communication between wearable device **106**, topside monitoring station **110**, satellites, remote communication stations such as cellular towers and the like. For example, buoy location determining element **412** may communicate by 3G, 4G, 5G, long term evolution (LTE), general packet radio service (GPRS) for communication directly to a cloud storage or satellite data link. In some embodiments, buoy transceiver **406** may communicated with emergency communication system and local emergency beacons for SOS satellite emergency response.

[0036] In some embodiments, a distance between diver **102** and topside buoy **108** may be determined. In a first exemplary scenario, buoy transducer element **414** may include a plurality of

transducers. The plurality of transducers may be arranged in a triangular formation such as, for example, an equilateral or isosceles triangle. As such, the sonar signal transmitted from wearable device **106** or Scuba Tank Pod **104** of diver **102** may arrive at each transducer of the plurality of transducers at a different time. The time of arrival of the signal at each transducer may be based on the transducer that is nearest to the signal origin relative to the transducer that is farthest from the signal origin. As such, the time difference between the time of arrival of the sonar signal at the three transducers, based on a constant speed of the sonar signal through water, may be used to determine the angle from which the signal came. In general, the difference between the time of arrival at each transducer may be in the range of 60-70 microseconds based on a distance (e.g., 4 inches) between each transducer. The angle from which the signal originated along with the depth of the diver, may provide the relative location of diver **102** to topside buoy **108**. Because topside buoy **108** location is known by buoy location determining element **412**, the location of diver **102** is also known. Combining phase differences between the transducer signals may additionally or alternatively be utilized to determine direction and/or position.

[0037] In some embodiments, the distance between diver **102** and topside buoy **108** may be determined by measuring the time for the sonar signal to cross from diver **102** to topside buoy **108**. In some embodiments, the sonar signal may transmit time along with the dive data. In some embodiments, a first packet of the sonar signal may be a pilot pulse comprising information about the sonar signal. The pilot pulse may comprise information indicative of the time that the signal was transmitted from wearable device **106** and is synchronized with other wearable device and scuba tank pods on other divers and topside buoy **108**. The time delay between transmission and receipt may be used to determine the distance travelled. Furthermore, a periodic transmission at an expected time may be programmed such that the expected time of arrival and the actual time of arrival of the sonar signal may be indicative of the travel time of the sonar signal through water. The travel time, based on the speed of the sonar signal in water, may be determined, and, as such, the distance between diver **102** and topside buoy **108** may be determined. Any affects based on water salinity and temperature may be taken into account for the speed of the sonar signal in water. As such, the location of diver **102** relative to topside buoy **108** may be determined using the measured water pressure (e.g., depth of the diver), angle from which the sonar signal originated, and the time of travel for the sonar signal. The method of determining a location of diver **102** relative to topside buoy **108** described herein is provided as an example, and any known or subsequently discovered method may be used without departing from the present teachings.

[0038] In some embodiments, the location of diver **102** relative to topside buoy **108** may be used to determine the geographic location of diver **102**. The location of topside buoy **108** may be known by location determining element **412**. Location determining element **412** may be a GPS receiver or short-or long-range communication device for determining geographic location or location relative to another known object. Location determining element **412** may communicate as described in examples above such as WiFi, BLUETOOTH, RF, and any other method. The location may be determined by on-board programing using the location of GPS satellites, digital compass information, attitude information, internal navigation information, beacons, cellular towers, and local and remote reference stations such as topside monitoring station **110**. By combining the three-dimensional location of topside buoy **108** with the three-dimensional location of the diver **102** relative to topside buoy **108**, the geographic location of diver **102** may be determined.

[0039] In some embodiments, the location of diver **102** may be integrated with map data of the diving environment or diving area. The map data may be any open-source or privately owned data set indicative of underwater terrain, pipelines, shipwrecks, and the like. The location of diver **102** may be compared to the underwater terrain as well as man-made objects such that a location of diver **102** relative to obstacles and/or targets may be determined. For example, diver **102** may dive near a restricted area that has underwater obstacles such as, for example, turbines for generating electricity using underwater currents. The geographic location of diver **102** may be determined as

described above. Topside monitoring station **110** may determine the geographic location of diver **102** relative to the geographic location of the restricted area and transmit a warning based on proximity of diver **102** to the restricted area. In some embodiments, a threshold distance or a geofence is defined surrounding the restricted area. Diver **102** may be alerted based on the geofenced area.

[0040] In some embodiments, diver **102** may receive instructions on how to avoid the restricted area. The instructions may be provided in cardinal directions or a call to surface may be transmitted to wearable device **106** of diver **102**. The instructions may direct diver **102** to avoid the obstacles. The instructions may be displayed by wearable device display **302** of wearable device **106**. In some embodiments, the map data may be stored at topside buoy **108** and the signal to direct diver **102** to avoid the obstacles may be generated and sent by topside buoy **108** without topside monitoring station **110**.

[0041] In an alternative exemplary scenario, diver **102** may dive near a target object such as a pipeline that is need of repair and diver **102** may be an underwater welder that is hired to repair the pipeline. As such, the instructions may be sent from topside monitoring station **110** to diver **102** via topside buoy **108** or, in some embodiments, the signal may be sent directly from topside buoy **108** to direct diver **102** to the target location by wearable device **106**. Similarly, diver **102** may be an underwater explorer and topside buoy **108** may be placed at a location that an object was detected on the sea floor by a sonar device aboard boat **114**. Diver **102** may be directed to the location of the sonar hit. Similarly, the sonar hit may be a shipwreck, and diver **102** may be directed to the previously known location of the shipwreck. Any exemplary scenario may be imaged for diver **102** to either avoid a particular location or be directed to a particular location based on the objective of the dive.

[0042] In some embodiments, if diver **102** encounters trouble diver **102** may signal an emergency alert by wearable device **106**. Diver **102** may press any button, knob, electronic button provided on wearable device user interface **304** or by any other method. In some embodiments, the emergency alert may be triggered automatically by a triggering event. The triggering event may be, for example, proximity to obstacles, pressure measurement indicating depth below a threshold value, scuba tank gas below a threshold value measure by time or gas pressure sensor, lack of movement by diver **102** indicating that diver **102** may be stuck, slow response time from diver **102**, loss of communication with diver **102**, ascending too fast, and any other event that may be indicative of diver **102** being in an emergency situation. Topside buoy **108** may transmit an SOS to topside monitoring station **110**, beacon, or SOS emergency by satellite SOS or GEOS services.

[0043] In some embodiments, a plurality of divers may dive with topside buoy **108** in communication with all divers. In some embodiments, a plurality of topside buoys may be used. FIG. 5 depicts an exemplary scenario where dive interface **500** may be presented at topside monitoring station **110** in communication with a plurality of divers in the water by topside buoy **108**. Topside monitoring station **110**, in this exemplary scenario, may be a mobile device and diver interface may be displayed by a mobile application stored on the mobile application or accessible as a cloud application. Topside monitoring station **110** may be any computing device and any online website or local-or cloud-based application may be accessed to display dive interface **500**. In some embodiments, dive interface **500** may be stored on wearable device **106** and may be accessible to diver **102**. The data collected by the sensors associated with the scuba tank pod **104**, wearable device **106**, and topside buoy **108** may be transmitted to the topside monitoring station **110**. Topside buoy **108** may relay data and messages to and from the topside monitoring station **110** by a local network or short-range communication as described above. In some embodiments, dive interface **500** may be presented in real time at topside monitoring station **110** and/or on wearable device **106**. Furthermore, the dive data may be stored and dive interface **500** and may be presented after the dive for review.

[0044] As depicted, location interface **502** is depicted on dive interface **500**. In some embodiments,

location interface **502** depicts a radar screen showing cardinal directions **506**, rings **504**, diver indicia **508**, and location accuracy wedge **510**. In some embodiments, location interface **502** presents the radar screen showing relative position of each of the divers in the water relative to topside buoy **108** as well as an estimated accuracy of the diver locations. A diver indicium may be displayed for each diver that is communicatively connected to topside buoy **108**. Diver indicia **508** may provide the name or an identification number of the diver associated with diver indicia **508**. Each diver may be communicatively connected to topside buoy **108** by wearable devices and/or scuba tank pods as described in embodiments above. Each device may have an associated identification that may be associated with the diver wearing the device. The identification number may be included in the sonar signal transmitted to topside buoy **108**. As such, each diver is tracked and in communication with topside buoy **108** and, in some embodiments, topside monitoring station **110** and the other divers. Therefore, any of the above-described embodiments associated with a single diver may be similarly applied to a plurality of divers.

[0045] As shown, location accuracy wedge **510** may indicate an accuracy of the location determined for diver **102**. For example, diver **102** may view the radar screen on wearable device **106** and select the indicia that displays “YOU.” When selected, diver data associated with diver **102** may be displayed as well as location accuracy wedge **510**. Location accuracy wedge may have a width that provides a possible area when diver **102** may be located. Furthermore, location accuracy wedge **510** may be color coded to show a quick reference as to the accuracy. Location accuracy wedge **510** may be narrow and green showing a high location accuracy. Similarly, location accuracy wedge **510** may be medium wedge and yellow or wide and red. Any possibilities of width and color may be imagined as well as any shape. For example, circles or squares may be used at detected locations or different shapes may indicate different divers.

[0046] In some embodiments, menu **512** may provide options for topside monitoring station user **112** such as messaging button **514**, stats button **516**, and more. In some embodiments, topside monitoring station user **112** may communicate with diver **102** via topside buoy **108** via a messaging interface provided by messaging button **514**. The messaging interface may be any standard messaging interface. Topside monitoring station user **112** may type a text message that may be transmitted to topside buoy **108** over the local network or short-or long-range communication described herein. Topside buoy **108** may then transmit the message to wearable device **106** by the above-described sonar communication. In some embodiments, dive interface **500** may be provided on any mobile device and may integrate with any direct or text messaging system of the mobile device (e.g., imessage, SMS, and direct message). Furthermore, the dive interface **500** may be accessed on any tablet, laptop, desktop, or any other computing device and may similarly integrate with the host system messaging applications. As such, any computing device may be used by topside monitoring station user **112** to communicate diver status information to wearable device **106** of diver **102** by message including the location of diver **102** and instruction to diver **102**.

[0047] When stats button **516** on menu **512** is selected, stats interface **518** may be presented. Stats interface **518** may provide visualizations of the dive data including diver status data. The exemplary pressure and depth data for each diver may be displayed in graph **520**. Graph **520** depicts a bar graph for visualizing the pressure and a lower table **522** depicting depth of each diver. Each diver name may be presented on name table **524** for associating each diver with the corresponding data. Data table **526** may also displayed for easy reference to show each diver name and associated depth and pressure data. Stats interface **518** may provide similar visualizations for any data, including, for example, tank gas pressure, time under water, location and distance from topside buoy **108**, and any other data that may be collected and displayed. Any above-described diver data may be displayed as well as any environmental conditions such as, for example, water temperature, water depth, water currents, wind speed, air temperature, barometric pressure, and any other data that may be collected underwater or above water.

[0048] In some embodiments, dive interface **500** may also display alerts and notifications if any

diver is outside of a normal range of operation. The normal range of operation may be defined for each set of variables by threshold values. For example, scuba tank **116** of diver **102** may include enough air for a one-hour dive. A threshold time limit may be set for forty-five minutes. When diver **102** is breathing from scuba tank **116** for 45 minutes a notification provided to diver **102** by wearable device **106** and by dive interface **500** by, for example, highlighting the diver's name and displaying a time left and a countdown until diver **102** is out of air. In another exemplary scenario, a depth threshold may be applied. A recreational dive may be restricted to forty meters. If diver **102** dives beyond 30 meters a yellow alert may appear, and communications may be provided to diver **102** to return to a safe depth. If diver **102** dives beyond forty meters a red alert may appear and diver **102** may be automatically notified to return to the surface. Thresholds may be applied to any dive statistic discussed herein.

[0049] In another exemplary embodiment, diver **102** may be a single diver and may use topside buoy **108** as depicted in FIG. 1. Diver **102** may use topside buoy **108** with an anchor and a tether. For example, the diver **102** may dive closely to shore by swimming out with topside buoy **108** to GPS coordinates provided by location determining element **412** on topside buoy **108**. The GPS coordinates may be displayed on wearable device **106** and provide a distance to a stored location of the GPS coordinates and provide an indication when the diver **102** has arrived at the stored GPS coordinates. The location coordinates may be provided by GPS or Iridium receiver.

[0050] Diver **102** may drop an anchor for topside buoy **108** such that topside buoy **108** remains close to the GPS coordinates. As diver **102** descends, a water current may push diver **102** off course. The location of diver **102** relative to topside buoy **108** may be determined as described above, and, because the geographic location of topside buoy **108** is known along with the GPS coordinates of a target object, topside buoy **108** may transmit directions to diver **102** to locate the target object. Furthermore, topside buoy **108** may transmit an alert to diver **102** when diver **102** is in proximity to the target object. Similarly, topside buoy **108** may send an alert to diver **102** when diver **102** is in proximity to underwater obstacles as described above.

[0051] In some embodiments, the application and dive interface **500** may integrate with a chartplotter for boat navigation. The dive data may be sent from topside buoy **108** to the chartplotter, which may automatically be displayed on a map of the chartplotter. This allows topside monitoring station user **112** to not have extra screens to monitor diver **102** and, as such, all information needed to navigate boat **114** and monitor divers is provided on a single screen. Furthermore, boat **114** may be in an autopilot mode. In some embodiments, boat **114** may be controlled to follow diver **102** such that diver **102** is always within a threshold distance of boat **114**. Diver depth information may be utilized by the boat **114** to ensure proper distance between the boat **114** and diver **102**. As such, diver **102** may freely dive without worry of swimming too far from boat **114**. In some embodiments, boat position may be transmitted to diver **102** such that diver **102** may view relative position of boat **114** on wearable device **106**. Furthermore, if diver **102** dives beyond a maximum threshold from boat **114**, boat **114** may be automatically navigated to diver **102** and an alert may be presented to topside monitoring station user **112** and diver **102**.

[0052] The chartplotter, or other marine electronics, may be coupled with its own transducer for fishfinding, object detection, and other traditional purposes. In such configurations, the chartplotter may utilize its own transducer to communicate directly with the one or more divers and/or the buoy **108** instead of using radio frequency techniques. Additionally, upon receiving diver data from the diver(s) and/or buoy **108** via the chartplotter's transducer, the chartplotter may transmit the diver data, and/or information associated therewith, to users' smartphones, remote servers, and communication networks using a radio associated with the chartplotter. Thus, in some configurations, chartplotter may provide similar functionality to buoy **108**.

[0053] FIG. 6 depicts dive analytics interface **600**. In some embodiments, dive analytics interface **600** is presented after the dive; however, the dive analytics may be accessed at any point during the dive. In some embodiments, dive analytics interface **600** may depict map **602**, depth analysis **604**

comprising depth graph **606**, water temperature analysis **608** comprising water temperature graph **610**, heart rate analysis **612** comprising heart rate graph **614**, gas consumption analysis **616** comprising gas consumption graph **618**, and tank pressure analysis **620** comprising tank pressure graph **622**. The dive parameters for analysis here are exemplary and any data that may be obtained during the dive may be analyzed such as, for example, blood oxygen, blood pressure, core temperature, water currents, location, wind speed on surface, air temperature, and any other data associated with the dive and environment during the dive.

[0054] In general, dive analytics interface **600** may provide a history of dive data such that topside monitoring station user **112** and diver **102** may review the dive. Diver **102** may review heart rate, gas consumption, and tank pressure, and may develop various dive methods to keep heart rate down and slow gas consumption to stay underwater longer. Furthermore, as described above, diver **102** may store locations of interest and review the stored locations post dive. The dive locations may be stored and presented as relative locations or geographic locations. The analytics presented via dive analytics interface **600** may provide valuable information about the dive such that diver **102** may modify and improve future dives.

[0055] FIG. 7 depicts an exemplary transducer roll cage **700** for buoy transducer element **414** on topside buoy **108** or any other transducer on any of the above-described components. In some embodiments, transducer roll cage **700** may be configured to protect buoy transducer element **414** from sudden forces such as if topside buoy **108** is dropped, hit by boat **114**, or investigated by marine life. Transducer roll cage **700** may surround buoy transducer element **414** and absorb energy from impact on housing **402** of topside buoy **108**. Transducer roll cage **700** may be provided around each transducer element when a plurality of transducer elements are present such as, for example, when three transducers are arranged in the triangular formation as described in embodiments above. As such, all transducer elements of the plurality of transducer elements may be protected.

[0056] FIG. 8 depicts an exemplary method for monitoring the status of diver **102** by the topside system generally referenced by numeral **800**. At step **802**, dive data may be obtained by topside buoy **108** from wearable device **106** by the sonar signal. The dive data may include any of the above-described data associated with the dive such as, for example, water pressure and depth, time spent underwater, tank gas pressure and estimated time remaining, diver biometric data, and any other data that may be collected and transmitted to topside buoy **108**. A time delay of the sonar signal may be determined as well as an angle from which the sonar signal originated.

[0057] At step **804**, topside buoy **108** may process and store the obtained dive data. The dive data may be stored at topside buoy **108** for future processing and review for analytics visualization as described in relation to FIG. 5 and FIG. 6 above. Furthermore, the dive data may comprise any messages and location input from diver **102** to wearable device **106**. The dive data may be processed for transmission to topside monitoring station **110**.

[0058] At step **806**, topside buoy **108** may transmit the dive data to topside monitoring station **110**. The transmission may be performed by short-or long-range communication such as WiFi, BLUETOOTH, RF, 3G, LTE, 4G, 5G, and any other standard format. In some embodiments, topside monitoring station **110** may be on boat **114** or may be on shore, or any location that may be in proximity to topside buoy **108** or at a great distance. In some embodiments, topside buoy **108** may transmit the dive data by satellite.

[0059] At step **808**, topside monitoring station **110** may process and display the dive data. As described above and displayed in FIG. 5 and FIG. 6, the dive data may be displayed as well as the processed analytics data. Topside monitoring station **110** may receive the dive data from topside buoy **108** and process the data to be visualized and/or transmitted and stored. Furthermore, at step **810**, topside monitoring station **110** may receive instructions either automatically based on the determined location of diver **102** and the dive data or by topside monitoring station user **112**. The input data may be in any form including message data that may be transmitted to wearable device

106 via topside buoy **108**.

[0060] At step **810**, topside buoy **108** may receive and process data from topside monitoring station **110**. The data may be received by buoy transceiver **406**. The data including the instructions may be processed and sent to buoy transducer element **414** and a sonar signal indicative of the data may be generated. The sonar signal may be transmitted to wearable device **106** and displayed for diver **102**. In some embodiments, wearable device **106** may automatically generate a signal receipt message that may be transmitted to topside buoy **108** and relayed to topside monitoring station **110**.

[0061] In some alternative embodiments, topside buoy **108** may in communication with an autonomous underwater vehicle (AUS). The AUS may use stored navigation waypoints or receive navigation information from topside buoy **108** in communication with topside monitoring station **110**. The AUS may dive deeper than diver **102** and may explore locations that diver **102** may not be able to dive. As such, it may be advantageous for diver **102** to be replaced by the AUS. The AUS may be connected electronically to wearable device **106** or the components of wearable device **106** such that the communication between AUS and topside buoy **108** is as described in embodiments above. As such, AUS may operate similarly to diver **102** as described.

[0062] In some embodiments, monitoring equipment may be stationed below the water surface and may be in communication with topside buoy **108**. For example, water current at various depths may be measure by sensors disposed on an anchor line, or the status of electric generators on the sea floor may be monitored and transmitted to topside buoy **108**. As such, topside buoy **108** may store the data and transmit the data and any alerts to monitoring stations anywhere around the world.

[0063] In another exemplary embodiment, fishing equipment such as, for example, underwater nets, crab traps, lobster traps, and the like may be placed underwater for extended periods. The fishing equipment may be connected to topside buoy **108** and provide sensor data that may indicate that marine life has been caught. As such, a signal may be transmitted to a mobile device of the fisherman. The fisherman may be alerted when there is motion in the traps and retrieve the fishing equipment.

[0064] Although the invention has been described with reference to the embodiments illustrated in the attached drawing figures, it is noted that equivalents may be employed, and substitutions made herein without departing from the scope of the invention as recited in the claims.

[0065] Having thus described various embodiments of the invention, what is claimed as new and desired to be protected by Letters Patent includes the following:

Claims

1. A topside buoy system for communicating with a plurality of divers each having a wearable device, the topside buoy system comprising: a communication element configured to wirelessly communicate with a topside monitoring station to receive message data for the plurality of divers; a processing element coupled with the communication element, the processing element adapted to process the received message data and generate a corresponding electrical signal; a transducer element coupled with the processing element and adapted to generate a sonar signal corresponding to the received message data for reception by the wearable devices of the plurality of divers; and a buoyant housing retaining the communication element, the processing element, and the transducer element.
2. The buoy system of claim 1, wherein the buoyant housing includes a roll cage to surround the transducer element.
3. The buoy system of claim 1, wherein the transducer element is configured to: receive sonar signals generated by the wearable devices of the plurality of divers, and process the received sonar signals to generate data for transmission by the communication element of the topside monitoring station.
4. The buoy system of claim 1, wherein the processing element is configured to generate position

- information for each of the plurality of divers based on sonar signals received by the transducer element and control the communication element to transmit the position information for each of the plurality of divers to the topside monitoring station.
- 5.** The buoy system of claim 1, wherein the communication element is selected from the group consisting of a Wi-Fi transceiver, a Bluetooth transceiver, and a satellite transceiver.
- 6.** The buoy system of claim 1, wherein the transducer element includes a plurality of transducers.
- 7.** The buoy system of claim 1, wherein the topside monitoring station is one of a smartphone, a tablet, a chartplotter, and a desktop computer.
- 8.** The buoy system of claim 1, wherein the message data includes text information directed to the plurality of divers.
- 9.** A topside buoy system for communicating with a plurality of divers each having a wearable device, the topside buoy system comprising: a transducer element adapted to transmit sonar signals to, and receive sonar signals from, the wearable devices of the plurality of divers; a communication element configured to wirelessly communicate with a topside monitoring station to send and receive data for the plurality of divers; a processing element coupled with the transducer element and communication element, the processing element adapted to: process sonar signals received from the plurality of divers to generate text message data for transmission to the topside monitoring station using the communication element, and process data received from the topside monitoring station through the communication element to generate sonar signals for transmission by the transducer element to one or more of the plurality of divers; and a buoyant housing retaining the transducer element, the processing element, and the communication element, the buoyant housing including a roll cage to surround the transducer element.
- 10.** The buoy system of claim 9, wherein the processing element is configured to generate position information for each of the plurality of divers based on sonar signals received by the transducer element and control the communication element to transmit the position information for each of the plurality of divers to the topside monitoring station.
- 11.** The buoy system of claim 9, wherein the communication element is selected from the group consisting of a Wi-Fi transceiver, a Bluetooth transceiver, and a satellite transceiver.
- 12.** The buoy system of claim 9, wherein the transducer element includes a plurality of transducers.
- 13.** The buoy system of claim 9, wherein the topside monitoring station is one of a smartphone, a tablet, a chartplotter, and a desktop computer.
- 14.** The buoy system of claim 1, wherein the sonar signals transmitted by the transducer element correspond to text message data for one or more of the plurality of divers.
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