

Ocean Exploration Advisory Board

A Federal Advisory Committee Act Committee

October 2, 2015

Honorable Kathryn D. Sullivan, Ph.D.
Under Secretary of Commerce and
Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Under Secretary Sullivan:

The Ocean Exploration Advisory Board (OEAB) would like to provide you with several recommendations. We seek further discussion on all, or any, of the following:

Observation

We continue to commend the cooperation provided by your Ocean Exploration and Research (OER) office and the leadership of Dr. Alan Leonardi. We note that OER planning/spending is more aligned with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA line office requirements than ever before.

Near Term Priorities

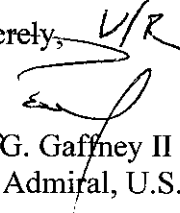
- FY16 Continuing Resolution (CR). Allocate funding at a rate at least equal to the average of the Senate Appropriations Committee and House Appropriations Committee marks until a final CR or Conference Committee Resolution is settled.
- FY17 Budget Proposal. Propose a NOAA OER budget that at least recognizes the Congressional Appropriation Committees' support for the program.
- The Extended Continental Shelf project should be completed as quickly as possible.
- OKEANOS EXPLORER and NAUTILUS have had notable success, to NOAA's benefit, in FY15, yet both ships are older and/or under-capitalized for the mission.
 - Develop top level requirements for capital upgrades of NAUTILUS and OKEANOS EXPLORER,
 - Develop a roadmap for investment in technologies to allow ships in the federal fleet to conduct exploration operations (viz., "fly-away" systems), and
 - For reliability and visibility purposes, limit OKEANOS EXPLORER operations to the US EEZ on the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts, Gulf, Caribbean and Hawaiian waters. Avoid deployment to the Marianas in FY16.

Principles

- Great nations are exploring nations; hence OER's viability is important to US prestige and character.
- Telepresence enables participation of a broader and more balanced user group in achieving successful STEM careers; NOAA can lead the nation in this regard.

- Exploration days-at-sea are expensive; every opportunity should be taken to collect samples and measure bio/geo/chemical/dynamics/acoustics phenomena.
- Creatively pursue partnerships, cost sharing or contracts to reach NOAA OER exploration, technology and education requirements.
- Take advantage of the recent OSTP endorsement of “citizen science/open science” and “crowd sourcing” by leading pilot projects within the NOAA OER program.
- Support periodic OER community meetings wherein NOAA officials express your future requirements and exploration opportunities are discussed by other stakeholders, thereby leading to better proposal writing and partnerships.
- Develop and use meaningful metrics for management and evaluation of OER investments and operations.

Sincerely,


Paul G. Gaffney II
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Chair

Copy to:
Dr. Richard Spinrad
OEAB file