

**Ocean Exploration Advisory Board**  
A Federal Advisory Committee Act Committee

September 14, 2016

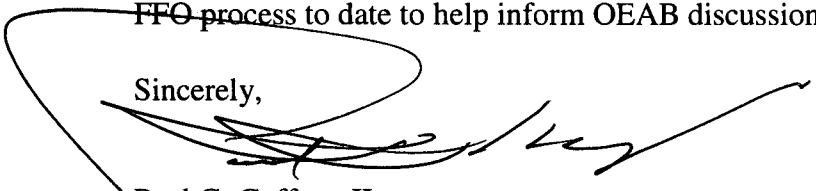
Honorable Kathryn D. Sullivan, PhD  
Under Secretary of Commerce and  
Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Dr. Sullivan:

The Ocean Exploration Advisory Board (OEAB) is required by its enabling law and by its charter to conduct an annual review of the competitive grant selection process used by the Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER) for effectiveness and quality. To that end, OER briefed the Board on its annual Federal Funding Opportunity at our September meeting. The process is the same as that used widely within NOAA. It is akin to the NSF peer review system, but adds a pre-proposal step in the process. The Board voted unanimously (with one recusal and two absentee) to endorse the FFO process OER uses.

The OEAB has asked OER to provide additional information about the nature and results of the FFO process to date to help inform OEAB discussions in the future.

Sincerely,



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

cc: Dr. Richard Spinrad  
NOAA Chief Scientist