VADM Paul G. Gaffney II, USN (ret.)
Chair, Ocean Exploration Advisory Board
1112 Gist Street
Columbia, SC 29201

Dear VADM Gaffney:

Thank you for your letter transmitting recommendations and advice from the Ocean Exploration Advisory Board (OEAB) regarding sea-going needs for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER) and NOAA’s general ocean exploration needs. I value the OEAB’s advice and appreciate the OEAB’s recommendations on this important topic.

I know you and the OEAB are well aware of the challenges NOAA faces in recapitalizing the fleet while ensuring we maintain and operate our existing platforms efficiently. The Administration’s budget priorities and policies will have important implications for how NOAA moves forward toward the 21st century fleet the NOAA Fleet Plan envisions. But the OEAB’s suggestion that NOAA consider more flexible platforms and consider tapping excess capacity available through the oil and gas industry is interesting as a possible way to meet some of NOAA’s ocean exploration requirements and complements the approach described in the NOAA Fleet Plan.

I would like to invite you and the new OEAB Chair to meet with me and our Assistant Administrator for Research at your convenience for a discussion of the Board’s recommendations, and to discuss the additional ways the OEAB can help NOAA through the expert advice provided. I have asked my staff to make the appropriate arrangements.

I look forward to meeting with you and John Kreider.

Sincerely,

Benjamin P. Friedman
Deputy Under Secretary for Operations
Performing the duties of the Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
and NOAA Administrator