

**Ocean Exploration Advisory Board**  
A Federal Advisory Committee Act Committee  
21 July 2017

Mr. Benjamin P. Friedman  
Deputy Under Secretary for Operations  
Performing the duties of Under Secretary of Commerce  
for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator  
14<sup>th</sup> and Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Mr. Friedman:

On behalf of the Ocean Exploration Advisory Board (OEAB), I want to thank you for taking the time and effort to meet with us on 12 July. The OEAB is invigorated by your participation and clear support for both the concept and execution of “Ocean Exploration” (OE) by NOAA. We also appreciate your interest in engaging the OEAB.

Our charter is specific in describing our purpose to advise the NOAA Administrator on matters pertaining to ocean exploration. We strongly believe NOAA and the nation would be well-served by a bold, innovative initiative for the U.S. to advance its leadership position in OE. We acknowledge the renewed interest in OE by Congress, the U.S. Navy, and other agencies, and we applaud your recognition of OE’s value to the NOAA mission.

The shortest path to a substantive national OE program clearly is for NOAA to increase the OER budget. In the interest of advancing the NOAA-led, national OE program, the OEAB recognizes we can pursue multiple actions to enhance OE value in concert with your stated objectives and our discussion on 12 July:

- 1) Help improve collaborations and partnerships with federal and international stakeholders to leverage OE activities and augment strategic planning;
- 2) Foster new and expanded partnerships with private stakeholders and not-for-profit institutions;
- 3) Assist with effective planning to put in place both NOAA ships and non-NOAA vessels of opportunity, which may be identified and acquired through a range of innovative mechanisms, e.g., through long-term lease arrangements and potential pilot programs with OER;

- 4) Support increased effectiveness of OE operations by focusing on modular mission packages, including fly-away ROVs, mobile telepresence capabilities, and development/deployment of autonomous vehicles and sensors;
- 5) Evaluate OE tasks within NOAA (field observations, data analysis, and distribution of high-quality products) and advise OER on potential improvements; and
- 6) Advise on development of the future workforce and partnering to increase effectiveness of external communications, particularly with K – 12 outreach initiatives, to improve public awareness of the importance of OE to the nation.

The OEAB values your stated objective of maintaining an open line of communication among the OEAB and your staff to ensure effective coordination. Shortly, we will present you options for our continuing activities in support of one or more of the priorities listed above. We look forward to your guidance and advice on priorities and our most value-added actions.

Sincerely,



John R. Kreider  
Chair, Ocean Exploration Advisory Board