

Ocean Exploration Advisory Board
A Federal Advisory Committee Act Board

7 April 2019

Neil A. Jacobs, Jr. PhD
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction,
performing the duties of
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
Herbert C. Hoover Building
14th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Jacobs:

The NOAA Deputy Administrator requested the Ocean Exploration Advisory Board (OEAB) to provide recommendations for reauthorization of the NOAA Ocean Exploration and for a National Ocean Exploration Program at its last meeting, 26-27 March, in Oakland. Further to those discussions and subsequent interactions, the OEAB has prepared comments and recommendations which address both a National Ocean Exploration Program (NOEP) established outside of NOAA and reauthorization of the NOAA Ocean Exploration Program.

I am pleased to transmit these findings and recommendations in the attached document. A summary follows:

Key Findings

1. There is an urgent need to explore and understand the oceans. America's welfare depends on the U.S. EEZ and global ocean systems.
2. The prosperity and security of our nation depend on successful stewardship of the oceans. Better cooperation and engagement among government agencies, research institutions, foundations, and the private sector are essential to enable:
 - a. successful stewardship of and more effective decisions regarding the oceans and coastal environments;
 - b. national economic growth; and,
 - c. development of agile strategies that promote and use new technologies.
3. A robust National Ocean Exploration Program is vital to the interests of the United States and decisive for its security, economy, and the health and well-being of all Americans. Such a National Program is critical to re-establish the United States at the forefront of global ocean exploration and stewardship.
4. Strong partnerships among public, not-for-profit, and private sector entities to conduct ocean exploration activities are indispensable for:
 - a. an improved understanding of the ocean;
 - b. more effective and efficient ocean exploration technologies and approaches;
 - c. improved processes and useable products for data management, access, synthesis, and visualization; and,
 - d. a strong private sector base as a key resource for ocean exploration activities.

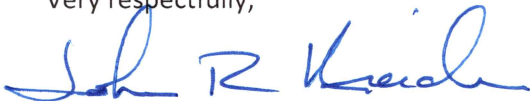
5. An agile strategy which stimulates development and makes use of new technologies and approaches is crucial to meeting urgent national and NOAA ocean exploration requirements.
6. Education and public outreach are imperative ocean exploration activities, which provide opportunities to advance Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) priorities and to engage the public in ocean science.

Recommendations for the National Ocean Exploration Program and NOAA Ocean Exploration Program

1. For the National Program, the OEAB recommends formation of a National Ocean Exploration Council (NOE Council) and National Consortium for Ocean Exploration (NCOE) under the Ocean Policy Committee, recently established in the OSTP by Executive Order.
2. The NOE Council of senior federal agency representatives facilitates interagency coordination with significant incentives to cooperate and engage. Activities of this Council constitute the National Ocean Exploration Program.
3. The Council should establish a National Consortium for Ocean Exploration, which consists of private sector and other non-federal stakeholders.
4. The Council/Consortium strategy engages traditional and non-traditional ocean exploration practitioners to achieve the following objectives:
 - a. Advance collaborative partnerships between federal agencies and non-federal entities to perform mutually beneficial ocean exploration activities for effective and efficient response to national needs;
 - b. Conduct interdisciplinary ocean exploration activities to meet national priorities;
 - c. Accelerate development and use of assets, infrastructure, platforms, and innovative approaches to complement existing assets and capabilities of federal agencies; and,
 - d. Advance processes for ocean exploration data management, access, synthesis, and visualization for the benefit of the nation.
5. The OEAB believes both a National and a NOAA Ocean Exploration Program, with robust partnerships among federal agencies and with other stakeholders, are essential to respond to challenging, yet vital, national needs in ocean exploration.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or desire additional information.

Very respectfully,



John R. Kreider, Chair
NOAA Ocean Exploration Advisory Board

Attachment

cc: RDML Timothy Gallaudet (USN, ret)
Brandon Elsner
Members of the NOAA OEAB
David McKinnie, Designated Federal Officer
Alan Leonardi, PhD, Director, NOAA Ocean Exploration and Research