

Prepared Talking Points
for The Honorable Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.,
Deputy Director for Climate and Environment,
White House Office of Science and Technology Policy
to the Ocean Exploration Advisory Board (NOAA)
4/7/2021 (15 min)

- Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.
- I would first like to thank Dr. Alan Leonardi for your many years of service to OER and to NOAA, to ocean exploration and to the ocean science and technology communities. Through your leadership at OER, the ocean exploration program at NOAA has expanded to include new partnerships across the US government and across sectors and to meet the pressing data needs of the most unknown parts of our ocean. I sincerely wish you fair winds and following seas in your new role at Consortium for Ocean Leadership.
- Thank you to all of the members of the Ocean Exploration Advisory Board for all the good work that you have been doing to advance ocean exploration and technology in service to NOAA.
- In part due to your thoughtful advice to the NOAA Administrator which reverberates across the interagency ocean community, we have seen rapid advancement in exploration and mapping activities in recent years. There is now a new scale of coordination on ocean mapping, exploration, and associated technologies through the *National Strategy to Map, Explore, and Characterize the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone* and establishment of the NOMECS.
- Similarly, we have seen revitalized interagency and cross-sectoral coordination through reinvigoration of the National Oceanographic Partnership Program, or NOPP.

- The Biden Administration recognizes the progress that has been made on these topics, and I want to assure you that we will continue to support the great work that is underway, and adjust, adapt, strengthen and add new areas of focus where needed as we continue to develop and implement our policy agenda.
- I am thrilled to have the opportunity to support and build on these efforts by serving the nation in my new role as OSTP's Deputy Director for Climate and Environment. In this role, I will work tirelessly to ensure that good science is helping inform administration decisions and the nation as we tackle the critical challenges of our time – COVID, economic recovery, climate change, and racial equity.
- Ocean exploration is an area that touches on all of these priorities. To address COVID and similar infectious diseases, compounds isolated from marine organisms are a key resource for the discovery of new pharmaceuticals. A sustainable blue economy will advance opportunity for all Americans and people across the globe as we build back our economy and seek to ensure healthy ocean ecosystems. Ocean data are key to driving solutions to monitor, mitigate, and adapt to climate and other environmental changes; the ocean exploration has a unique contribution to make, with its focus on deep and poorly studied environments. And finally, we must break down barriers to entrance to the ocean and earth sciences to build a diverse and impactful community of ocean scientists.
- As a lead agency in implementing the NOMECS Strategy, NOAA, and OER in particular, has a significant role to play in implementing NOMECS to support administration priorities. Mapping and characterization data can inform siting of offshore wind installations to meet the goal of doubling wind energy production by 2030. Similarly, NOMECS data can inform decisions about marine protected areas to meet the goals of protecting 30% of the land and the ocean by 2030. There is still significant unknown biodiversity in the ocean, which exploration of remote environments and use of novel technologies, like environmental DNA, will help reveal.
- Climate change impacts all parts of the ocean, and ocean exploration can facilitate new opportunities to obtain critical climate measurements such as

deep ocean temperatures and carbon content of seafloor sediments, to help us predict and monitor future climate impacts.

- In just the last year, NOMECE has reached numerous milestones. The NOMECE Strategy was released in June 2020, and the NOMECE Council and Interagency Working Group on Ocean Exploration and Characterization were formed shortly thereafter to facilitate Federal coordination on mapping, exploration, and characterization. The NOMECE Implementation Plan was released with opportunity for public input in January 2021. The Implementation Plan is considered a living document, and a required 2023 update presents an opportunity to adapt NOMECE to the urgent demands of our time.
- The Interagency Working Group on Ocean and Coastal Mapping is now finalizing its initial draft of the Standard Ocean Mapping Protocol, prepared with broad input from topical experts. The Interagency Working Group on Ocean Exploration and Characterization has spent the last couple of months convening Federal experts across subject matter areas of expertise to develop an initial draft of exploration and characterization priorities. I look forward to reviewing these priorities, and ensuring administration goals are included in how we prioritize exploration in the coming years.
- A key component of the NOMECE Strategy and Implementation Plan is the opportunity for all relevant sectors to participate meaningfully in the strategic planning and execution of NOMECE activities. The NOMECE Council is planning its first workshop to take place within the next couple of months to initiate a conversation on how they can best work across industry, philanthropy, and government.
- Similarly, the Council held a Tribal Listening Session in January to ensure ongoing inclusion of tribal voices in NOMECE implementation and plan its approach to including nation-to-nation consultation in NOMECE planning.
- Finally, a suite of activities planned for the Blake Plateau Ridge this summer will serve as the NOMECE pilot project. This work includes four NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer* expeditions and two NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster* expeditions to map, explore, and characterize this understudied region. One expedition is a partnership between NOAA, USGS, and BOEM to survey a former

seabed test mining site to understand the long-term impacts of mining activities.

- On January first of this year, Congress reauthorized the National Oceanographic Partnership Program, or 'NOPP,' which engages government, industry, academia, and philanthropic organizations in applied ocean research and ocean education and workforce development.
- This successful program, which has been administered by the Office of Naval Research, will now be expanded to support increased agency and community participation.
- The reauthorization also formalized the Ocean Policy Committee, comprised of Agency heads and other government leadership, which helps coordinate ocean policy across the federal government and provides policy recommendations to the President regarding ocean-related issues.
- The reauthorization further reestablished the Ocean Research Advisory Panel, a federal advisory committee comprised of a cross-section of the ocean community, to advise the ocean policy committee on ocean research issues.
- The NOPP and the Council will serve under the direction of the Ocean Policy Committee.
- In addition, the long-standing Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology, or 'SOST,' comprised of agency leaders and subject-matter experts, coordinates ocean S+T policy through key policy documents such as *Science and Technology for America's Oceans: A Decadal Vision*, which identifies pressing research needs and areas of opportunity within the ocean S&T enterprise for the decade.
- As the Administration engages these tools in the context of its policy goals, they will support a robust domestic program dedicated to understanding and helping effectively and sustainably manage activities in U.S. waters.
- I also look forward to our work together in the international space, because we know that international boundaries are meaningless to ocean critters and currents, to the climate and weather that the ocean drives, and to many of the ocean services on which humanity depends, so understanding

the global ocean is necessary to understanding and effectively managing our part of it.

- OSTP's Chief of Staff and Acting Director, Kei Koizumi, spoke at the recent US launch of the UN Decade on Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, where he shared the administration's commitment to engaging in the Ocean Decade, and working collaboratively with international partners. The NOME C Council has an article *in press* in a special issue of ECO magazine on opportunities to connect NOME C activities with the UN Decade.
- In closing, I will have more to say to the ocean science, technology, and exploration community going forward, in concert with my colleagues in the White House and leadership in your agencies. But for now, let me conclude by saying again how much I, and OSTP, and the Administration, appreciate your contributions to the Nation. We have much to do, and ocean exploration will play an important role in our collective work going forward.

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