



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
Washington, D.C. 20230

February 13, 2025

Dr. Vicki Ferrini
Chair, Ocean Exploration Advisory Board
NOAA Ocean Exploration
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Ferrini:

Thank you for your November 2024 letter on behalf of the Ocean Exploration Advisory Board (OEAB). I value and appreciate the Board's expertise and insight – particularly your perspective on how the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) can enhance public engagement, expand its exploration activities, and transform ocean data into accessible information products. Your advice is critical to the success of NOAA's Office of Ocean Exploration and Research.

The Board's emphasis on partnerships and engagements, investment into commercial data and novel solutions for processing of that data, and strategic collaborations are highly welcomed. In particular, I firmly share the Board's views in making public engagement a front-end priority that closely aligns with NOAA's emphasis on broad stakeholder engagement, as well as exploring areas beyond the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone to enrich our understanding of the ocean while strengthening NOAA's long-term priorities.

The Board's guidance on data transformation – specifically the potential benefits of artificial intelligence and machine learning – will shape NOAA's future steps toward making ocean data more accessible. Likewise, your insights for developing interoperable data systems that inform the foundations of the new blue economy are well-received.

In addition, NOAA shares in the enthusiasm of any future opportunities offered by NOAA Ship *Discoverer*. With commissioning anticipated in 2026, this transition marks an exciting new chapter for NOAA's ocean exploration efforts. The *Discoverer's* enhanced design will unlock new possibilities for scientific discovery, and early engagement with stakeholders will be critical to realizing its full potential. We appreciate the Board's steadfast support at this pivotal juncture and look forward to collaborating to ensure the new ship fully advances our national program of ocean exploration.

THE ADMINISTRATOR



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NOAA remains dedicated to advancing ocean exploration for the benefit of our Nation and the global community. I look forward to our continued partnership and to working with the OEAB as we navigate both the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Nancy Hann in blue ink, with "VADM/NOAA" written above the signature.

Vice Admiral Nancy Hann
Deputy Under Secretary for Operations
Performing the Duties of Under Secretary
of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
and NOAA Administrator

cc: Jeremy Weirich, Director, NOAA Ocean Exploration
David Turner, OEAB Designated Federal Officer