



National Association of Marine Laboratories

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The Honorable Wayne T. Gilchrest
Chairman
Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans
Committee on Resources
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Gilchrest:

On behalf of the National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML), I would like to submit comments on the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Act – H.R. 50 – pending before your subcommittee. NAML believes that ocean issues should be elevated to the highest policy level and we support this legislation as a step in that direction.

NAML is a nonprofit organization of over 120 member institutions representing coastal, marine, and Great Lakes laboratories stretching from Guam to Bermuda and Alaska to Puerto Rico. Members serve as unique “windows on the sea,” providing information on the rich environmental mosaic of coastal habitats as well as offshore oceanic regions and the Great Lakes. NAML is comprised of three regional associations which offer access to local communities at the grass roots level. These regional associations include the Northeastern Association of Marine and Great Lakes Laboratories (NEAMGLL), which covers institutions located on the Great Lakes as well as the eastern seaboard north of Maryland; the Southern Association of Marine Laboratories (SAML), which includes laboratories from Maryland to Texas, Bermuda and the U.S. Virgin Islands; and the Western Association of Marine Laboratories (WAML), which encompasses laboratories on the west coast, Hawaii and the U.S. Pacific Islands. Through these unique national and regional networks, NAML encourages wise local land management and the protection of natural resources, and works together to achieve goals that benefit oceanic and Great Lakes research, education and outreach.

We ardently believe that ocean and coastal policy decisions should be based on sound science. Therefore, NAML supports the provisions within H.R. 50 that create a Science Advisory Board within NOAA, establish a new Deputy Assistant Secretary for Science and Technology leadership position, and re-align NOAA’s functions to support ecosystem-based management approaches. These provisions will ensure that emerging problems affecting human health, environmental vigor, coastal industries, and port security, to name a few, will be addressed through strong, reliable scientific research.

In addition, NAML is pleased that an entire section of the bill has been dedicated to ocean and coastal science research and education. In order to address ocean, coastal and Great Lakes issues appropriately, we need a well-trained and informed workforce. NAML laboratories provide expert training for marine biologists and oceanographers, but their capacity must be enhanced to meet future

needs. Therefore, we support efforts to enhance ocean, coastal and Great Lakes education and outreach programs at all levels. NAML would also like to see NOAA restructured in a way that allows it to be more engaged with academic university science and education with enhanced competitive grant programs, such as the National Sea Grant College Program and National Ocean Service grants.

We realize that H.R. 50 has been designed with the purpose of providing organization for NOAA and as such does not address specific program issues. Nevertheless, we would like to highlight for the Subcommittee some issues raised by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy which can perhaps be legislatively addressed at another time.

Although efforts are made in H.R. 50 to coordinate Federal agencies involved in ocean, coastal and Great Lakes research and national and international programs regarding coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes observing systems, further investment is still needed to ensure that these systems are sustained and that they incorporate the long-term monitoring efforts of the nation's coastal and marine laboratories. As you know, integrated observations offer critical information on coastal processes necessary for addressing issues, such as the health of humans and marine life, weather and climate nowcasts and forecasts, homeland security, and resource management.

The laboratories within NAML have been addressing this need for many years, however, funding has been difficult to sustain. If such a national observing system is adequately funded, however, NAML could be instrumental in its development, thanks to its collective, diverse array of observing platforms and programs, its unsurpassed pool of scientific expertise with approximately 10,000 scientists, its strong communication network, and specific connectivity projects, such as CastNet. NAML enthusiastically supports the recommendations made by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy to develop a sustained integrated ocean observing system.

Additionally, it is imperative that the U.S. invest in the infrastructure of its coastal and Great Lakes laboratories. Currently, funds are inadequate in supporting basic laboratory facilities, instrumentation, support systems, computing facilities, and ship access. The final report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy makes several recommendations on the need to develop and enhance the nation's ocean and coastal infrastructure. These recommendations include the creation, by Congress, of a mechanism that ensures a "dedicated funding stream for critical ocean science infrastructure and technology needs." In addition, Congress should establish an Ocean Policy Trust Fund within the U.S. Treasury to support these new coordinated and comprehensive national ocean policies.

NAML would like to thank you for acknowledging the importance of ocean, coastal and Great Lakes sciences and the essential role that NOAA plays in advancing marine research, education, outreach and the development of public policy. We are strongly supportive of the work of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and feel that the utilization of its recommendations will ensure that our

Nation's oceans, coasts and Great Lakes receive the precedence they deserve, as their health directly impacts us all. An organic act for NOAA is essential to the modernization of the agency, and we urge the Subcommittee to take the necessary steps in ensuring that this important piece of legislation is enacted into law.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these views. If NAML can provide any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me or Mr. Joel Widder, who handles government relations for NAML, at 202-289-7475.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeffrey M. Reutter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "J".

Jeffrey M. Reutter, Ph.D.
President

National Association of Marine Laboratories