



# National Association of Marine Laboratories

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July 18, 2007

NOAA Research Council  
c/o Mr. Derek Parks  
Silver Spring Metro Center Bldg. 3  
Room 11335, R/PPE  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Mr. Parks:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on *Research in NOAA: Toward Understanding and Predicting Earth's Environment*. This new five year research plan released in June 2007 is a comprehensive plan representing the current NOAA research agenda. We are particularly pleased at the plan's recognition and discussion regarding the linkage between NOAA research and the Nation's economic competitiveness. We believe this is an essential point and encourage NOAA to use this plan and other forums to continue to educate policy makers regarding this fundamental linkage.

We are also pleased that the NOAA research plan is closely tied to the interagency Ocean Research Priorities Plan and puts a strong emphasis on a broader understanding of the global ecosystem as a whole in a way that will address the ever changing array of social, economic, and environmental needs that we face today and can expect to face in the future.

The research plan addresses the role of NOAA's external research and education partners in helping to maintain and strengthen the research enterprise that underpins the execution of NOAA's missions while also contributing to the Nation's long term economic and environmental health. As the plan says, **"NOAA cannot achieve the research milestones listed in this plan by itself."** We appreciate NOAA's recognition of the important contributions that the extramural community make in helping NOAA carry out its various missions through such programs as the National Sea Grant College Program, the National Undersea Research Program, Ocean Exploration and other programs.

To that end, as the research plan is revised, we urge NOAA to lay out in more specificity how it will substantively engage the extramural community in implementing this research plan and the agency's overriding mission goals. The plan provides some discussion of the existing mechanisms and programs designed to harness the value of the extramural community. However it also provides little insight into how these valuable extramural programs will be strengthened or emphasized over time as part of this research plan and the agency's strategic missions.

*The National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML) is a nonprofit organization of over 120 member institutions representing coastal, marine, and Great Lakes laboratories in every coastal state, 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 member laboratories conduct research and provide a variety of academic, education and public service programs to enable local and regional communities to better understand and manage the ocean, coastal and Great Lake environments. NAML is comprised of three regional associations: the Northeastern Association of Marine and Great Lakes Laboratories (NEAMGLL); the Southern Association of Marine Laboratories (SAML); and the Western Association of Marine Laboratories (WAML).*

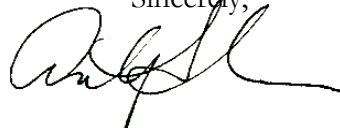
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While this draft plan emphasizes NOAA research, we believe that research and education are inextricably linked and appropriately integrated. A strong scientific and technological workforce is an essential part of this Nation's drive to strengthen its international competitiveness. The environmental sciences central to the NOAA research portfolio, can be powerful magnets for attracting, retaining and training students – particularly minorities and others not well represented in the Nation's research enterprise. We applaud the plan for also recognizing the role of the academic community in preparing the next generation of scientists for careers germane to the NOAA mission. We suggest that this research plan should recognize the integrated nature of research and education and include a discussion of specific NOAA efforts to attract and retain the next generation of scientists and engineers into areas important for the agency's missions.

At one point early in the current NOAA Administrator's tenure, a policy to utilize 50% of all new research resources to support competitive, merit-based extramural research support was under development. As members of the extramural research and education community, we see such a goal is an important indicator of the real priority NOAA attaches to its relationship with its extramural partners. We suggest that such a goal be explicitly included in this research plan and that it be implemented aggressively via NOAA's research and education programs.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft NOAA research plan. We look forward to additional opportunities to work collaboratively to strengthen our nation's research and education enterprise.

Sincerely,



Anthony F. Michaels  
President

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