



National Association of Marine Laboratories

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July 30, 2007

Honorable Bart Gordon
Chairman
Committee on Science
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Ralph Hall
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Science
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Gordon & Ranking Member Hall:

On behalf of the National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML), I am writing to comment on the Oceans Conservation, Education, and National Strategy for the 21st Century Act (OCEANS-21), HR 21, which is currently before your Committee for consideration. NAML enthusiastically encourages the Science Committee, under your distinguished leadership, to favorably consider this legislation. For the first time since the release of the reports of the Pew Oceans Commission and the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, Congress is considering a comprehensive bill that would address many of the recommendations made within these reports. As an organization representing the ocean, coastal and Great Lakes research and education communities, we believe that issues related ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes research and education should be elevated to the highest policy level. This legislation is deserving of your committee's support.

NAML is particularly pleased that OCEANS-21 establishes a national ocean policy, promotes ecosystem-based approaches to management of the Nation's oceans and resources, recognizes the role of the oceans in global climate change, seeks sustained funding for ocean conservation and management through an ocean and Great Lakes conservation trust fund, and enhances ocean stewardship through education and outreach. Even more, we are encouraged that OCEANS-21 recognizes the vital role that the extramural research community plays in advancing the Nation's ocean, coastal and Great Lakes enterprise as well as the role of public education and outreach and the importance of fostering an ocean literate populace and workforce. Let me take a moment to highlight a few of the provisions within the bill.

First, an organic act for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is essential to the modernization of the agency. Title II of OCEANS-21 seeks to codify NOAA into law; this is vitally important for the future of the Nation's ocean enterprise. NAML is pleased that OCEANS-21 maintains NOAA as the lead ocean agency as well as the central focal point for coordinating ocean resource, research, and management efforts across the federal government. While the Nation's oceans, coasts and Great Lakes are governed and managed by countless laws and fall under the jurisdictions of several federal agencies, the laws and efforts of those agencies to date have been poorly coordinated. As a result, the

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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oceans have suffered. Only by placing the responsibility of coordinating future activities with NOAA can the ocean interests of this Nation progress.

Second, one of the top recommendations of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative (JOCI) is the codification of the Committee on Ocean Policy—originally created by Executive Order 13366 in 2004—and establishment of a Cabinet-level National Ocean Advisor. Title III of this bill seeks to do both, thereby elevating ocean issues to the level of importance which it deserves. NAML is supportive of this effort. In addition, the bill would establish the Council of Advisors on Ocean Policy to advise the National Ocean Advisor and the Committee on Ocean Policy. NAML is pleased that under this Act the membership of that Council would include representatives from the marine science research and education community. Because of their direct proximity and accessibility to ocean, coastal and Great Lakes information and data, marine labs provide a wealth of information. The expertise of the extramural community should be utilized whenever possible to help in the development of policy and determination of best practices to ensure that it is based on sound science.

Third, the bill specifically encourages partnerships with institutions of learning, especially minority-serving institutions. NAML member laboratories contribute to maintaining a competitive and first-rate marine research and education workforce by providing a unique training ground that is conducive to first-hand learning and mentoring. Marine labs are committed to enhancing diversity within the field of ocean, coastal and Great Lakes research and education and act as a model for other institutions by fostering relationships with community colleges and minority-serving institutions to provide distinctive learning opportunities for individuals who may not otherwise have an opportunity to participate in such research.

Finally, we are extremely supportive of Title V of the bill which would create an Ocean and Great Lakes Conservation Trust Fund to fund the many important actions within this bill. The development of such a fund has been a recommendation of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative for years and would ensure that the U.S. is able to support and regularly enhance its investments in our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes and their resources.

NAML would like to thank you and the Committee for your thoughtful consideration of the issues outlined in this letter. We hope you will act positively and expeditiously on this ground-breaking legislation that has so many implications for our Nation's oceans, its resources, and its citizens. 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 at the information printed on this letterhead.

Sincerely,



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