



National Association of Marine Laboratories

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November 9, 2007

The Honorable Frank Lautenberg
United States Senate
SH-324 Hart Senate Office Building
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The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senate
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Dear Senator Lautenberg and Senator Cantwell:

On behalf of the National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML), I am writing to strongly endorse S. 1581, the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring Act of 2007. This bill recognizes the importance of taking action to address the ongoing effects of ocean acidification. While ocean acidification is one piece of a much larger issue—carbon cycling and climate change—we applaud you for your initiative and leadership in moving this critical component forward.

PAST PRESIDENT

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Climate change has clearly taken center stage in the public policy arena. It impacts nearly every aspect of life on Earth, including the oceans. Acidity in sea water is increasing as a result of accelerated levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. The stability of the marine food chain, marine life in general, and human health in particular are now all at increasing risk. The United States must act now to fully comprehend the complex ramifications of this emerging trend. This can only be done through an integrated approach that utilizes both the strengths of the relevant federal agencies and the research expertise available within the non-federal extramural community.

TREASURER

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As an organization representing about 120 ocean, coastal and Great Lakes marine laboratories nationwide—the on-the-ground “first-responders” with regard to new knowledge derived from the oceans—NAML is concerned about the potential adverse impacts of ocean acidification on marine life and human health. Also, we understand that to be successful in addressing this issue, we must work together at all levels. We support the mechanism S. 1581 creates which seeks to coordinate ocean acidification research and monitoring through the Interagency Committee on Ocean Acidification. As S. 1581 acknowledges, the various federal agencies within the Executive Branch have been supporting research related to ocean chemistry for years; for the first time, under this bill, a coordinated effort will be used to address a problem that has no agency boundaries.

SECRETARY

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NAML encourages the Federal government to look to the extramural research community whenever possible in order to ensure that the best available science is being used to shape policy. We are pleased that S. 1581 calls on the Interagency Committee on Ocean Acidification to develop a strategic research and implementation plan and to consult with entities such as the National Research Council, the Ocean Research and Resources Advisory Panel, the Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology, and others in the development of the plan. In addition to those bodies listed in the legislation, NAML encourages you

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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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to also include the non-federal ocean and Great Lakes research and education community in that consultation process, particularly marine labs and institutions of higher education. This could be accomplished by giving the external community an opportunity to provide insight on the issues surrounding ocean acidification prior to the development of the strategic plan—via a national workshop, for example—and by providing the public a formal opportunity to comment on a draft plan before it is finalized. In addition, the Ocean Research and Resources Advisory Panel, as an established board of ocean experts representing the public, could be given oversight responsibility for the plan. Engaging the larger ocean and coastal community—federal and non-federal in partnership—in a discussion on the real needs for an ocean acidification plan would help improve its final recommendations.

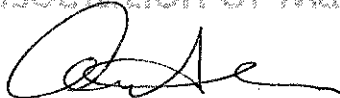
NAML is pleased that the bill calls for the strategic research and implementation plan to identify and strengthen existing Federal programs. The National Sea Grant College Program and the National Undersea Research Program in NOAA, and NOAA-University Cooperative Institutes are examples of how the Federal government can utilize existing national programs with a trusted track record for success to help contribute to accomplishing the goals of the plan. A similar case can be made for programs within the National Science Foundation and the Environmental Protection Agency, among other federal agencies.

NAML strongly supports the bill's provision to fund competitive, merit-based grants for research projects related to the "effects of ocean acidification on ecosystems and the socio-economic impacts of increased ocean acidification." We are particularly pleased that the bill calls for at least 50 percent of program funds to be committed to funding competitive extramural grants. We also support the bill for highlighting education and public outreach as an activity of the program. Public engagement and literacy of the issues affecting our oceans is crucial if we are to be successful in reducing the anthropogenic factors contributing to the acidification of our oceans. Finally, we wish to note that temperate and polar environments may be just as susceptible to the effects of ocean acidification as coral reefs. We encourage you to amend Sec. 2(a) so that it reflects the broad range of environments impacted by ocean acidification in order to portray the true magnitude of the problem.

Thank you for the opportunity to express these views. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide you with additional information about NAML or our views on S. 1581.

Sincerely,

The National Association of Marine Laboratories



Anthony F. Michaels
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cc: The Honorable Daniel Inouye, Chairman, Senate Commerce Committee
The Honorable Ted Stevens, Vice Chairman, Senate Commerce Committee