



National Association of Marine Laboratories

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Mr. Ray Ban

Chairman

Science Advisory Board

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

1315 East West Highway

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Attn: noaa.sab.comments@noaa.gov

Dear Mr. Ban:

The National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML) is pleased to submit its comments on the draft report entitled, *In the Nation's Best Interest: Making the Most of NOAA's Science Enterprise*.

NOAA's R&D portfolio review is part of the agency's efforts to ensure its investment in R&D contributes to the economic, employment, national security, nutritional, life and property benefits to the nation. The task force that developed this report – the R&D Portfolio Review Task Force (PRTF) – was directed to examine how the current state of research at NOAA supports the strategic goals in the agency's Next Generation Strategic Plan. The PRTF was also charged with recommending management changes where necessary to ensure alignment with those goals.

As the SAB knows, the ocean is a major economic asset for the Nation. For example, in the U.S. and using 2010 statistics, 52% of the population lived in coastal watershed regions generating nearly 60% of the nation's GDP in 2010. Most imported goods (over \$1.2 trillion/year) and exports moved through coastal waterways and ports. Commercial fishing generated over \$32 billion in income and more than one million jobs, while recreational fishing supported \$19 billion in income and millions of additional jobs. Over 25% of U.S. domestic oil was produced from coastal and offshore waters. Oil refineries and wind farms, military installations and assets, rail and road networks, all crucial for national security, energy, commerce, and transportation, are concentrated along coasts. In our globally connected world, land-locked nations derive many benefits from the ocean such as general commerce and ocean products, and are impacted by the ocean's influence on the distribution of rainfall and heat.

For NOAA to meet its stewardship responsibilities for the oceans, coasts, and the Great Lakes, a robust ocean and coastal science and education enterprise is essential. Coastal areas face challenges that threaten our fisheries resources, impact recreational and commercial resources and impact ecosystems. The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and its continuing impact on the natural resources of the region illustrates the need for a robust and responsive

The National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML) is a nonprofit organization of 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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ocean and coastal sciences enterprise. We must reinvest in the nation's research enterprise that has been responsible for our long-term prosperity and technological preeminence through interdisciplinary research spanning a landscape of disciplines, from physics to geology, chemistry to biology, engineering to social sciences, and modeling to observation.

The draft report makes a number of important recommendations. Of particular note are the recommendations calling for an increased emphasis on support for the socioeconomic sciences as well as in integrated ecosystem sciences. The report also points out that in enhancing the transition of research to operations, NOAA should forge new partnerships of researchers and end-users at the outset of a project, and to continue these partnerships until the project is complete – this also applies to partnerships among NOAA and university researchers through NOAA extramural programs. The PRTF also recommends, as have previous NOAA R&D reviews, that NOAA should increase its support for extramural research.

NAML strongly supports these recommendations. Increased extramural research could allow NOAA to leverage its R&D investment with the resources of the nation's leading university scientists. It could obtain greater and faster scientific advances at lower costs, particularly in areas of new research. This would also provide NOAA with greater flexibility, as permanent staff need not always be hired to conduct the research. To some extent, increasing NOAA's investment in extramural research can also compensate for the changes occurring in NOAA's workforce. The report states, and NAML agrees, that the balance between extramural and internal research will vary between NOAA activities, but a predictable and reliable partnership with the extramural research community is critical to NOAA's long-term success.

As available resources become scarcer, NOAA should enhance its partnership with the extramural research community in other creative and innovative ways. For example, NOAA should consider expanding its efforts to co-locate agency research staff and infrastructure at non-Federal marine labs as it considers some of the major reorganization recommendations in the PDTF's report. Such actions could not only result in significant cost savings and increased collaboration between NOAA and extramural researchers, but could also maintain, and perhaps increase, scientific productivity. By expanding collaboration with the extramural research community, NOAA could meet the Task Force's recommendation of ensuring a predictable and reliable extramural partnership while also enhancing NOAA's access to world class expertise available in the academic research community; access to unique research facilities; and helping to develop the next generation of a scientific and technologically competent workforce. In addition, by taking advantage of an expanded relationship with the extramural community, NOAA will leverage its resources achieving a greater return for its federal investment.

NAML appreciates the opportunity to provide these comments on the draft report. We look forward to NOAA's adoption of the report's key recommendations and their implementation in the coming months.

Sincerely,



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President

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