



13 - 5 2013

Mr. Matt Wellslager
Chair, Hydrographic Services Review Panel
South Carolina Geodetic Survey
5 Geology Road
Columbia, South Carolina 29212

Dear Mr. Wellslager:

Thank you for your recent summary of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP) meeting held in Silver Spring, Maryland, on May 7-8, 2013. I was pleased to attend the meeting and provide my perspective on NOAA's future and the role of NOAA's navigation services.

I welcome and appreciate the Panel's feedback and recommendations provided in your letter. Specific responses to the HSRP's recommendations are provided below.

Recommendation #1: *Develop trusted partnerships for bathymetric data*

- **The HSRP recommends the National Ocean Service investigate the possibility of developing a suite of tools that could be used to collect bathymetric data and meteorological data with the aim of creating trusted partnerships for crowd sourcing.**

NOAA Response: NOAA concurs with the intent of this recommendation. As discussed during the meeting, there are well-established avenues for receiving crowd-sourced meteorological data. For example, the National Weather Service receives data from the international Voluntary Observing Ship Program, the Cooperative Observer Program, and even experimental Twitter storm reports from people across the nation. Given NOAA's broad mandate for acquiring hydrographic data and providing nautical charts, the Office of Coast Survey does indeed seek to build similar routes for receiving bathymetric data from external sources. Because of NOAA's navigation safety mission, data applied to nautical charts must be accurate and authoritative; to meet this requirement, NOAA will proceed carefully to establish trusted partnerships for external data acquisition. For instance, we are pursuing a trusted-partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard for trackline sounding data.



Recommendation #2: *Provide additional hydrographic training and education capacity*

- **The HSRP recommends that NOAA maintain 100% of the funding for the Joint Hydrographic Center.**

NOAA Response: NOAA greatly values the Joint Hydrographic Center's contributions in both research and in advanced education and training. This Center's innovations and expertise have significantly advanced hydrography and ocean mapping in U.S. waters and beyond. NOAA will continue to support the JHC in these roles, to the extent that appropriations allow.

- **The HSRP recommends creation and funding of a second ocean and coastal mapping center, co-located with a center for higher education, for additional hands-on training and formalized education.**

NOAA Response: NOAA agrees with the Panel on the value of hands-on training and formalized education in hydrography and related disciplines, and will explore a variety of approaches for providing additional training and education for the government and private sector. We look forward to working with the Panel to establish goals and define participant requirements for additional training and educational programs.

Recommendation #3: *Fill open geodesist positions in the National Geodetic Survey*

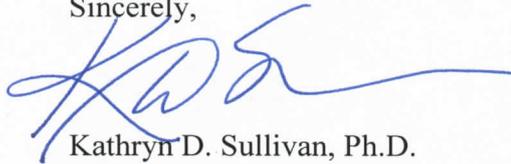
- **The HSRP recommends the hiring freeze be lifted to fill 10 to 20 open geodesist positions.**

NOAA Response: NOAA implemented a hiring freeze on March 27, 2013, in response to the budget challenges we faced from sequestration. NOAA has established a Hiring Freeze Board and exception process to approve hiring for vacancies that if left unfilled would cause mission failure. The HSRP's interest in this matter is appreciated. At this time maintaining the hiring freeze is necessary due to ongoing budget uncertainty and constraints. Vacancies will continue to be considered by the Hiring Freeze Board on a case by case basis.

I am pleased to hear that, despite challenges, the Panel was able to adapt to the virtual meeting format and that the technology resulted in increased public participation. Given fiscal constraints, NOAA and other Federal agencies must take actions to reduce travel expenses. Unfortunately, the fiscal outlook is not improving significantly, and we must continue to find ways to meet effectively while reducing associated costs. Assuming subsequent meetings continue to be held virtually, I do support the HSRP's proposal to co-locate the Chair and Vice-Chair here in the Washington area with the DFO, other non-voting Panel members, and NOAA staff during the HSRP's semi-annual meetings. In addition, I recognize and value the expertise, time investment, and advice that NOAA's Federal advisory committees provide to the agency, as well as the benefits of in-person meetings.

Please extend my appreciation to all the HSRP members for their ongoing dedication to strengthening NOAA and its navigation services in particular. I look forward to meeting with the Panel again in the future and, as always, welcome your recommendations to improve our products, services, and information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'KDS', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kathryn D. Sullivan, Ph.D.
Acting Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere

cc: Holly A. Bamford, Ph.D.