



*Ed Welch, Chair*  
*Matt Wellslager, Vice Chair*

January 19, 2011

Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.  
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Room 6217  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

The Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP), a NOAA Federal Advisory Committee, is pleased to report on our October 12 – 13, 2010, meeting in Vancouver, Washington. The HSRP heard presentations on important marine transportation and environmental issues and, based on our subsequent discussions, has developed a series of recommendations for your consideration.

At the Vancouver meeting, we received updates on a number of NOAA hydrographic programs and initiatives, such as the seafloor mapping program under the West Coast Governors' Agreement on Ocean Health and NOAA's continuing efforts in the *Deepwater Horizon* incident. We also heard details of joint efforts among the National Geodetic Survey, the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services, and the State of Oregon to restore tidal wetlands and salmon habitat, the type of collaborative effort we support and encourage throughout NOAA.

One of the most vital elements of each HSRP meeting continues to be the stakeholder panel that we hold in each region we visit. In Vancouver, we heard from both traditional maritime stakeholders, whose safety and livelihoods depend on NOAA's navigation products and services, and from users who rely on NOAA's foundational geospatial data for non-navigation purposes. Included were presentations on the need for more timely delivery of NOAA's navigation data and products for the Columbia River Bar and the opening and closing of the lower Columbia River for safety of maritime traffic; the importance of NOAA's Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS®) to the Columbia River system and the Northwest; how the Northwest region uses NOAA's survey data to support habitat restoration; use of multi-beam sonar data to support nearshore biological resources; commercial fishing uses of NOAA's navigation products; the use of NOAA's hydrographic data for offshore renewable energy; and expanded charting and navigation outreach efforts in the Northwest.

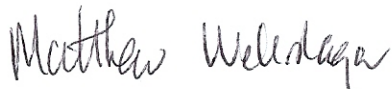
Based on stakeholder presentations on the topics noted above, the HSRP recommends that NOAA: (1) recognize the importance of its navigation and hydrographic products, information, and services; (2) recognize the significant economic, societal, and security benefits these products, information, and services provide, particularly to the trade and commerce of the United States Marine Transportation System; and (3) provide appropriate funding to support these programs. Specifically,

- The HSRP finds there is an increasing need for the integration of upland and seafloor data to be used for coastal and marine spatial planning, inundation modeling, and other uses that require a seamless land-to-sea terrain model. NOAA's VDatum utility is critical to this process but it requires further validation before it can be fully implemented. The HSRP recommends funding to support validation efforts and adjustments for full implementation of VDatum.
- Stakeholders expressed the need for more data about tides, currents, and wind speed and direction using NOAA's PORTS® to support safe shipping and improved efficiency for marine commerce on the Columbia River. The HSRP strongly recommends that NOAA support the maintenance and operation of all national PORTS® systems so all taxpayers bear the minimal cost of this critical public service to maritime commerce.

We wish to express appreciation to NOAA leadership and staff for attending and addressing the HSRP regarding NOAA's future direction on Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning and Ocean Policy, and for the time that so many take to attend and present at HSRP meetings.

We have enclosed a copy of the September 2010, update to the HSRP's special report on its "Most Wanted" Hydrographic Services Improvements, first published in 2007. The need for these improvements has only increased since that report as highlighted by the Ocean Policy, the NOAA Next Generation Strategic Plan (NGSP), and the regional input the Panel has been receiving. The next HSRP meeting is planned for Honolulu, Hawaii, in April, 2011, and we would be delighted if you could attend this meeting.

Sincerely,



Matthew Wellslager, Vice Chair  
Hydrographic Services Review Panel

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Larry Robinson, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere,  
NOAA  
David M. Kennedy, Acting Assistant Administrator, NOAA National Ocean Service