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SURVEYING GPS TIDES HYDROGRAPHY

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Date: June 16, 2009  
To: Tom Skinner  
Chair HSRP  
From: John Oswald  
President, JOA Surveys  
Re: Hydro Services contracting

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Input for the upcoming meeting on 6/22/09 regarding NOAA contracting.

Bullet # 8, Summary: *“Expands this list by adding the following mapping activity not subject to contracting: “services that can only be carried out aboard a NOAA ship or aircraft because the survey platform possesses unique operational capabilities not available in the private sector.”* JOA comment: The specifications for hydro surveys are the same for NOAA as the private sector. Several of the NOAA contractors we work for (as subcontractor) use and staff ships similar to NOAA vessels, and in some cases were previously owned by NOAA (Davidson and Mt Mitchell). Perhaps there are “special items” like AAV’s that this paragraph is designed for.

Bullet # 8, Summary: *“Deletes reference to NOAA’s annual hydrographic training and field procedures workshops owing to a recent decision to downsize these workshops and limit participation to Federal employees only.”* JOA Comment: I am surprised at this, as industry perception was that this was a good idea, i.e. . private sector and federal employees. For past 18 months this idea has been put forth by CO-OPS to have a similar procedures workshop; CO-OPS recently solicited comments from the contractors which were all positive as far as I know.

Page 2 6/5/09 Draft: *“NOAA will continue to examine ways to improve its contracting process, including minimizing the turnover frequency of contracting personnel and reducing the length of time required to award contracts and task orders.”* JOA Comment: I have witnessed this many times since 1998. I was told by NOAA in 2005 that more contracting personnel was NOT the solution. There are at least 3 OCS contractors that I am dealing with now, that are reasonable frustrated with this issue.

Other items:

1) Brooks Act vs. Negotiated RFP’s. JOA performs work under both types of contract vehicles (we may be unique in that respect). NGS and OCS work is Brooks Act. CO-OPS work is either through the GSA or Negotiated RFP’s (best value concept). The technical work is almost identical. JOA highly prefers Brooks Act methods as quality and accountability is stressed. Our financial terms for doing the work are the same.

2) University Competition: While the FAR allows Universities to procure hydro service contracts under open competition JOA recommends that Universities not be selected for work that is operational in nature. There is a very vital role for Universities to support NOAA hydro services but work should be “solving problems” such as “... conduct basic research and development and ensure the rapid transfer of derived technologies to the private sector” not building and maintaining PORTS and NWLON systems, for instance. Other great examples of University work for NOAA are the many research areas at the UNH Joint Hydrographic Center which have increased production and lowered costs for hydro surveys.