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September 21, 2009

Mr. Tom Skinner, Chair  
NOAA's Hydrographic Services Review Panel  
c/o NOAA Office of Coast Survey (N/CS)  
1315 East West Highway  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Dear Mr. Skinner:

I'm writing to NOAA's Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP) on the occasion of the Panel's meeting in the Great Lakes Basin in Duluth, MN. First, thanks for scheduling a meeting in the Great Lakes and I hope the Panel will get a variety of input on some of the Great Lakes needs and opportunities during this meeting. I also hope at some time in the future, the HSRP will again consider another meeting in the Great Lakes to get further input from diverse users in the eight U.S. states (and Canadian jurisdictions) which touch the shoreline.

I'm also writing to convey some public comment input, since due to travel time and resources, I'm not able to attend the meeting in Duluth. In my position with Michigan Sea Grant, I interact with many coastal stakeholder groups, including three tribal governments in my primary 7 county region, who need updated coastal information. In 2006, the US Army Corps of Engineers announced the Regional Coastal Mapping Program managed by the Joint Airborne Lidar Bathymetry Technical Center of Expertise (JABLTCX) where an airborne system will collect bathymetry, topography, digital orthophotography, and hyperspectral imagery for the Great Lakes. In my area, the northern part of Lake Michigan, such flights were flown in 2007 and penetration should be down to approximately 50 foot depths due to high water clarity. I get inquiries from biologists at the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa & Chippewa Indians a few times a year to see if the data are available yet. I would contact Corps of Engineers contacts 2-4 times per year but still no access. Last time I checked (spring, 2009) the Corps of Engineers staff indicated the data is all now at NOAA Coastal Services Center but evidently there are still technical difficulties with the data. I've not been able to get clear information on accessing the data or when it would be available and it is now fall, 2009. This issue may perhaps be more of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers issue than NOAA's issue but it seems to me that this project is directly in the spirit of the new Ocean and Coastal Mapping Integration Act legislation where the data is collected once and used many times by a variety of users.

Additionally, I've been pleased to be a part of Northwestern Michigan College's Great Lakes Hydrographic Survey project 2009-2010 where the college has partnered with the private sector (Kongsberg Maritime, C&C Technologies, Hypack, etc.), exposed students from the Great Lakes Maritime Academy and freshwater studies program to state of the art technologies and procedures, and begun to gather data for multiple purposes. This project will utilize a Kongsberg multi-beam system aboard a 56' survey ship in 2010. NOAA OCS's Great Lakes Regional Navigation Manager Brian Link was helpful in preparing background information for this project but I'd also like to see if there could be additional procedure and planning help for this demonstration project in 2010. One area lacking in the entire Great Lakes is access to a NOAA Joint Ocean & Coastal Mapping Center as referenced in the Ocean & Coastal Mapping Integration Act. Can the HSRP recommend one of the "up to 3" NOAA Joint Ocean & Coastal Mapping Center to provide technical assistance on Great Lakes projects?

Finally, I'm encouraged by the report to be presented by NOAA's National Geodetic Survey on work to be performed on the Great Lakes boarder area as well as hopefully the Lake Michigan shoreline (no Canadian boarder area) using Geodetic Survey resources over the next couple of years. I'd also like to request possible help from the Geodetic Survey for a possible NGS levels station in Grand Traverse Bay as a need suggested by Regional Navigation Manager Brian Link during his planning assistance with the above referenced project.

Thanks much for the work of the HSRP, the opportunity to provide this input, and for visiting the Great Lakes as part of your deliberations.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Breederland  
Michigan Sea Grant Extension, NW Michigan

cc: Rebecca Arenson, NOAA OCS  
Heather Stirratt, NOAA NOS  
Chuck Pistis, Michigan Sea Grant