



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**  
**The Under Secretary of Commerce**  
**for Oceans and Atmosphere**  
Washington, D.C. 20230

November 5, 2021

Ms. Julie Thomas  
Chair, NOAA Hydrographic Services Review Panel  
Senior Advisor, Coastal Data Information Program  
and SCCOOS  
Scripps Institute of Oceanography  
9500 Gilman Drive, No. 0214  
La Jolla, CA 92093

Dear Ms. Thomas:

Thank you for your letter and recommendations on behalf of the Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP). Additionally, I appreciate the testimony letter from Sean Duffy, Sr., HSRP Vice Chair, on his use of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) weather forecasts and warnings to plan for and mitigate the impacts of Hurricane Ida, as well as the recognition for the swift and efficient execution of post-storm aerial photogrammetry and hydrographic surveys in order to re-open the Mississippi River ports. These actions are vital to our blue economy.

With respect to the HSRP's recommendations, I offer the following updates:

- Your recommendation to enhance collaborations with other Federal agencies and industry spans all of NOAA's programs and missions and is acutely important for our hydrographic services partners. I have had the pleasure of meeting with multiple stakeholders and partners since I became NOAA Administrator. I look forward to further advancing routine, collaborative, and sustained engagement among other Federal agencies and the private sector. We cannot implement our vision for a New Blue Economy without the input and inclusion of our partners.
- NOAA's growing partnerships and collaborations also tie directly to our plans of meeting the Nation's increasing need for shallow water mapping that HSRP so astutely points out. NOAA's commitment to innovation and technology development through the whole value chain of hydrographic data from acquisition to dissemination is a critical component of the New Blue Economy. As stated during your meeting, I want to establish NOAA as the primary authoritative provider of climate products and services that can be applied to a diverse range of missions. Accordingly, I look forward to engaging more with HSRP to ensure NOAA is meeting current and future mapping and data needs.
- Data management is a complex undertaking at NOAA and, as you are aware, features prominently in the National Ocean Mapping, Exploration and Characterization Strategy,

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and the Standard Ocean Mapping Protocol (SOMP). While previous requirements have focused on standards and best practices for hydrographic data acquisition and processing, the SOMP includes detailed requirements for data management and elevates them to the same level as standards for operational fieldwork. NOAA will ask the HSRP to review and comment on the draft SOMP when it is available in 2022. NOAA's National Centers for Environmental Information are also conducting data capacity planning and forecasting through 2030. With the increase in ocean and coastal geophysical data volumes, part of this planning is to transition to the cloud for archive by 2027. This will reduce the reliance of on-premise storage and allow for more flexibility in planning. NOAA would welcome the opportunity to provide a briefing on our Cloud Strategy at a future HSRP meeting if this is of interest to the Panel.

Also, I would like to note the President's Fiscal Year 2022 requests for budget increases that would, if appropriated, directly support some of your recommendations. Specifically, there is a request for a \$10 million increase to sustain and modernize the National Spatial Reference System (NSRS) and the National Water Level Observation Network (NWLON), as well as other Navigation, Positioning, and Observations programs such as modeling. Together, the NSRS and NWLON provide the critical geospatial infrastructure upon which all other Federal, state, and local data can be accurately and consistently aligned – improving interoperability and better informing critical decisions along the coasts and across the country.

Again, we appreciate your recommendations. I am looking forward to continuing our partnership toward advancing climate data and services, diversity and equity, and environmental stewardship and economic development for a New Blue Economy.

Sincerely,



Dr. Richard W. Spinrad  
Under Secretary of Commerce  
for Oceans and Atmosphere  
and NOAA Administrator

cc: Sean M. Duffy, Sr., Vice Chair, HSRP