



Ed Saade, Chair
Julie Thomas, Vice-Chair
October 13, 2019

Dr. Neil Jacobs

Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction
Performing the duties of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Dr. Jacobs:

Please find the Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP) seven key recommendations, comments to the OCS Strategic Plan, and 2 issue papers from New Orleans meeting, August 27-29, 2019. Our meeting showcased Louisiana, the Mississippi river, the tremendous contribution and daunting challenges of the region to our nation's Blue Economy, and how it's aided by the information, data and services provided by NOS and NOAA. The excellent sessions highlighted the magnitude of the challenges, the importance of the Mississippi River as a transportation corridor, and the threat from widely ranging and rising waters, flooding and stressed levees.

RDML Gallaudet mentioned the White House Ocean Science and Technology Summit. Can you please advise on the role of NOS's hydrographic and navigation services? HSRP is interested to keep abreast of the progress and outcomes for NOS and if we can help with the preparation or presentations.

We heard the Admiral's goals of assessing the state of marine transportation, advancing the technology behind it, and continuing the effort of product integration. These goals align well with the priorities of the HSRP. He noted NOAA's vision for supporting the Western Pacific area for its key strategic importance to the nation and the possible mining of critical minerals and rare earth elements. We congratulate RDML Gallaudet on his appointment as chair of the CMTS and the HSRP will continue to contribute ideas to strengthen NOAA's leadership.

We will have a robust discussion on the Pacific region at the HSRP April 28-30, 2020 meeting in Oahu. We urge you to consider joining us on the opening day on April 28, 2020.

As follow up from past meetings, we were pleased to learn of the progress regarding public/private partnerships and engagement with academia, NOAA's partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard, and their support to disseminate NOS's environmental data over AIS. We look forward to updates on implementation on these and the other recommendations below.

HSRP Recommendations:

1. NOAA should prioritize and advocate for the continuous investment to improve and maintain NOS's Continuously Operating Reference Station (CORS) network, a vital component in the modernization of the National Spatial Reference System (NSRS). In the low-lying dynamic Mississippi River region, the continuous monitoring of land elevations and sea levels, along with accurate datums, models, and tools such as VDatum, are critical to the protection of lives and the nation's commerce. Increasing NOAA's support to modernize the NSRS is critical for providing the foundation for all geopositioning and modeling.
2. NOAA should continue to prioritize and improve providing precision navigation services to aid the safe operation of vessels in restricted visibility (i.e. fog, heavy rain or dust storms). Fog was

specifically discussed as a large economic impact to the shipping sector and where technology advances should help to address these issues. HSRP requests NWS be involved and provide regular updates.

3. NOAA should continue to share regular updates on key NGS, CO-OPS and NGS emergency response activities and sea level rise/subsidence studies as they pertain to the critical future and activities with vital data for our shoreline. The public attendance in New Orleans continued the expanding trend of interested, participating local technical, governmental and professional personnel that express concerns, request increasing knowledge and assistance with these topics: 1: Geodetic observations, with common datums and standard output. 2: Long term water level observations, 3: Climate and statistical analysis tools, 4: Model coupling, 5: Public education and capacity building.
4. Provide stronger support and encouragement for the NOAA/U.S. Geological Survey project for the 3D Nation Elevation Requirements and Benefits Study to document the business use benefits of topo-bathymetric data from the tops of the mountains to the depths of the ocean. This supports the blue economy, a combined western Pacific focus and economic growth.
5. Encourage NOAA to continue cooperative engagement with the USACE, the Mississippi River navigation industry and vessel pilots to develop and primarily use multi-beam technology that is rapidly deliverable, in accordance with government standards, and developed for the dynamic environment and extreme shoaling in places such as Southwest Pass, Louisiana, and elsewhere.
6. The HSRP asks NOAA to work with the Administration and Congress to secure their support for the full system costs of Physical Oceanographic Real Time System (PORTS), and the ability to enhance and expand PORTS as noted in the HSRP PORTS issue paper, "Ensure reliable federal funding for installation, operation, and maintenance of PORTS". The PORTS program is a critical federal safety of navigation service that serves as a public good. Stakeholders continue to provide favorable reports regarding the essential role played by PORTS, and in New Orleans we heard about the need for additional air gap sensors along the Mississippi River to avoid the increasing risks of a serious accident. There is record growth in the program driving demand and costs.
7. NOAA hydrographers and Mississippi River forecasters should strengthen and continue their focus on riverine flooding using or developing best tools and partnerships. Their predictive efforts are important data that NOAA should share with Congressional appropriators to better respond to increased flood events.

HSRP's comments to the draft Office of Coast Survey's draft Strategic Plan was discussed at the meeting and is attached. Please find the five documents enclosed.

Sincerely,



Edward Saade
Chair, HSRP



Julianna Thomas
Vice-Chair, HSRP

Enclosures (5)

- Issue Papers: 1) Maritime Services in the Arctic, and 2) Sea Level Rise/Subsidence
3) HSRP comments to the OCS Strategic Plan, Sept 17, 2019
4) HSRP Priorities Matrix, August 29, 2019
5) HSRP New Orleans meeting summary, August 27-29, 2019