



Tom Skinner, Chair
Edmund Welch, Deputy Chair

April 22, 2008

Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr.
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Under Secretary of Commerce for
Oceans and Atmosphere
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Room 6217
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Admiral Lautenbacher:

The Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP), a federal advisory committee to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) established by Congress in 2004, is pleased to present you with recommendations resulting from its most recent meetings in March and April, 2008. Both meetings were productive and resulted in several recommendations designed to assist NOAA in implementing the five major recommendations from the HSRP's 2007 Special Report *HSRP Most Wanted Hydrographic Services Improvements*.

At the HSRP meeting on March 7 in Miami, Florida, the HSRP heard comments from a number of hydrographic services users and other interested members of the public (see attached list of commenters). Based on presentations and comments at that meeting, the HSRP subsequently approved the following recommendations:

Coordinated seafloor mapping. As coastal resource management and offshore development pressures mount, states and localities are becoming more interested and involved in seafloor mapping activities in conjunction with federal agencies. However, there have been problems at the state level coordinating with the Minerals Management Service, U.S. Geologic Survey, the Army Corps of Engineers, and NOAA on mapping protocols and standards. We applaud the recently created Interagency Working Group on Ocean and Coastal Mapping and believe it is an effective forum to improve coordination among federal agencies and with the states.

- **The HSRP recommends that NOAA and other federal agencies – in partnership with the Interagency Working Group on Ocean and Coastal Mapping – continue their efforts to improve seafloor mapping coordination and efficiencies, and to involve interested state and local governments as early in this process as possible.**

Coral Protection and Safe Navigation in Miami. Local representatives from the Port of Miami and the Florida Coral Reef Program described a problem involving the need to move the anchorage area for the Port of Miami away from a sensitive coral area. NOAA surveys are needed to ensure that a new anchorage area avoids other coral, and has the proper holding ground, similar to the services NOAA provided to Port Everglades in recent years. In addition, a representative from the Biscayne Bay Pilots described the need to survey for better placement of approach buoys leading to the ship channel to help minimize last-minute maneuvers as vessels approach the Port of Miami.

- **The HSRP recommends that NOAA provide the necessary assistance to the Port of Miami to evaluate alternative anchorage areas and buoy placement to improve navigation and protect natural resources in this area.**

Height Modernization for Accurate Positioning and Elevations. The HSRP heard a presentation from two of its members on NOAA's efforts to reestablish accurate elevations throughout the United States using terrestrial leveling and GPS technology. NOAA's positioning infrastructure enables safe, efficient transportation and commerce, climate and sea level rise monitoring, weather forecasting, and storm damage mitigation, among other critical uses. The importance of height modernization was underscored by invited speakers who emphasized the need for accurate heights for flood plain determination, to prepare for storm surge inundation and evacuations in the coastal zone, beach renourishment, and resource management. Obtaining accurate gravity measurements across the nation would help NOAA modernize its positioning infrastructure for heights significantly and quickly.

- **The HSRP recommends that NOAA expand Height Modernization and pursue the GRAV-D program, which includes the airborne gravity data collection in a comprehensive fashion. A subgroup of the HSRP will also explore NOAA positioning issues further to provide more insight into the improvements needed and benefits generated by having accurate positions and elevations throughout the nation.**

One-Hundred Percent Requirement/Gap Analysis. With the release of its 2007 recommendations, the HSRP continues to review and support NOAA's efforts to implement these recommendations and improve its hydrographic services delivery. At the March 7 meeting, a 100 percent/gap analysis presentation provided a comprehensive snapshot of proposed hydrographic service improvements and gaps over the next several years, in an integrated and readily understandable format.

- **The HSRP believes a "100 %/gap analysis" of key hydrographic programs is an extremely useful tool in assessing NOAA's progress toward implementing key recommendations and recommends that NOAA deliver this analysis annually for the HSRP, Congressional committees, and other constituencies.**

Coast Guard Automatic Identification System (AIS). The HSRP discussed the merits of, and concerns with, the AIS-B system for recreational boaters, a relatively inexpensive version of the AIS-A system currently used by larger vessels to identify nearby vessels for improved communication and navigation. Currently, the AIS-B system is awaiting approval by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The HSRP believes that AIS-B could greatly improve identification and communication between and among large

and small vessels, but is concerned that it may also result in screen “clutter,” blocking out critical information for operators of large vessels.

- **The HSRP recommends that NOAA request that the FCC approve the use of AIS-B contingent upon the development of a filter to enable AIS-A users to block AIS-B information when conditions warrant.**

As always, we very much appreciate the attention and consideration that you and the NOAA team have provided the HSRP and look forward to continuing our work with NOAA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Skinner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "S".

Tom Skinner, Chair
Hydrographic Services Review Panel

cc: Mary M. Glackin, Deputy Undersecretary for Oceans and Atmosphere
John H. Dunnigan, Assistant Administrator for Ocean Services
and Coastal Zone Management