



Ed Welch, Chair
Matt Wellslager, Deputy Chair

June 21, 2010

Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.
Under Secretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Room 6217
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

The Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP), NOAA's Federal Advisory Committee on hydrographic services, is pleased to report on our May 2010 meeting in Providence, Rhode Island. The HSRP discussed a number of timely topics, including NOAA's role on the U.S. Interagency Ocean Policy Task Force and the Interim Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning Framework, NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan, and the draft Arctic Vision and Strategy. We also received updates on the continuing *Deepwater Horizon* response, NOAA's Fleet Recapitalization Plan, the Integrated Ocean Observing System's High Frequency Radar project, and NOAA's Navigation Services offices (the Office of Coast Survey, the National Geodetic Survey, and the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services).

One of the most vital elements of every HSRP meeting is the stakeholder panel that we hold in each region that we visit. In Providence we heard from both traditional maritime stakeholders whose safety and livelihoods depend on NOAA navigation products and services, and from users who rely on NOAA's foundational geospatial data for non-navigation purposes. Included were presentations on fishing vessel incidents in Cobscook Bay, Maine; Sea Level Rise and Climate; the Cape Cod Bay Mapping Project; Maritime Training at the Navy's Surface Warfare Officers School; and Rhode Island Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning in support of wind energy development.

In consideration of the stakeholder panel dialogue and the topics noted above, the HSRP makes the following recommendations to NOAA:

1) **NOAA's Next Generation Strategic Plan (NGSP)** – The HSRP recommends that the NGSP clearly emphasize the importance of the Marine Transportation System (MTS) to the national economy. The draft document refers to “safe, efficient and

environmentally sound marine transportation” as an objective of the long-term goal “Sustainable Coastal Communities.” NOAA navigation products and services are the foundation of a safe and efficient MTS, enabling national commerce to reach far beyond just coastal communities. Subsuming the MTS, including recreational boating into a goal built strictly around coastal communities misses this larger contribution to the national economy.

2) NOAA Fleet Operations and Recapitalization – The Panel is concerned that NOAA’s capacity for hydrographic surveying within the fleet is now reduced to three vessels and the operational effectiveness of these remaining vessels is too frequently hindered by maintenance and staffing issues. The Panel notes with concern the decreasing likelihood of the NOAA Ship *Hassler* operating in the near term, and the consequent protracted gap in hydrographic survey capacity. Furthermore, the Panel regards the seven-year capacity gap forecast in the NOAA Fleet Recapitalization Plan following the 2018 decommissioning of NOAA Ship *Fairweather* as unacceptable. The Panel strongly recommends that the planned NOAA Survey Vessel’s (NSV) primary purpose be hydrography and ocean mapping, and recommends that funding for the design and construction of the NSV be an accelerated priority for NOAA.

3) NOAA Surveying and Charting in Cobscook Bay, Maine – The Panel appreciates that NOAA has made surveying and charting Cobscook Bay an immediate priority. Compelling testimony during the stakeholder panel persuaded the HSRP that a modern hydrographic survey and adequate portrayal of these treacherous waters at a larger scale will serve to mitigate future risks to life, property and the environment.

4) Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Nautical Chart Distribution – The Panel heard from Captain Henry Marx, Landfall Navigation, regarding nautical chart agent concerns about the FAA decision to reduce the number of chart agents from 1000 to fewer than 100. The FAA, responsible for the printing and distribution of NOAA lithographic paper nautical charts, has also proposed to significantly restructure the chart pricing strategy with terms potentially adverse to the remaining chart agents. Additionally, the FAA announced it will no longer be the distributor of National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency nautical charts of foreign waters to chart agents. While the latter decision by FAA is not a primary issue for NOAA, sharply reducing the retail availability of NOAA paper charts could impact safe navigation. The Panel is therefore concerned and recommends that NOAA proactively resolve the issue between the FAA and chart agents or take other action to ensure an adequate network for the distribution and retail sales of paper nautical charts.

5) NOAA Hydrographic Services Data to Support Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning (CMSP) – Hydrographic data, including foundational geospatial, tide and current data, are essential to support CMSP activities. The Panel recommends NOAA and the federal government recognize the very real need for accurate hydrographic services data to support CMSP.

6) **H.R. 2864, Amendment to the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act** - The HSRP recognizes the need for expanded hydrographic services in the Arctic, and therefore supports the May 6, 2010 testimony (enclosed) by Captain John Lowell on behalf of NOAA in support of House Resolution 2864.

7) **Noting the beneficial uses of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding to enhance NOAA hydrographic services** - The HSRP recommends NOAA keep at the ready proposals for hydrographic services to quickly include in future economic stimulus or supplemental appropriations developed by Congress and the Executive Branch.

8) **Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping (IOCM)** – The Panel notes that several States are undertaking seafloor mapping efforts, and we encourage NOAA to more aggressively establish a coordinated IOCM approach to leverage these non-traditional mapping data sources for NOAA nautical charting. One potential opportunity is the West Coast Governors’ Agreement on Ocean Health implementation plan, released on May 20, 2010, which identifies seafloor mapping as an issue area.

9) **Prioritization of Hydrographic Surveys in Non-navigationally Significant Areas** – The Panel recommends NOAA Office of Coast Survey review non-navigationally significant areas for recent changes in use. Maritime activities in these areas can change over time, as in the case of Cobscook Bay, where different fishing grounds are now used.

10) **HSRP 2010 Panel Membership Solicitation** - The cancellation of the 2009 solicitation process was unfortunate. As a result, your next appointments to the HSRP must cover both the 2009 and 2010 solicitations, and there will be 10 or 11 new Panel members (out of 15) beginning in 2011. Thus, the HSRP faces an imminent loss of significant corporate knowledge about prior Panel activities, discussions, and recommendations. Ideally, there should be three staggered classes of HSRP appointees with terms of four years per class to ensure a regular infusion of new HSRP members while preserving a core of institutional memory and knowledge. The HSRP strongly recommends that you stagger the next appointments by designating half of the 2011 appointees to serve the remaining three years of the four-year term for the class of 2010, and appointing the remaining new members to full four-year terms beginning in 2011.

Furthermore, the HSRP is emphatic in underscoring that its primary purpose, as articulated in 33 U.S.C. 892c, is to advise you, the NOAA Administrator, on matters related to the data gathering and dissemination duties set out in the Coast and Geodetic Survey Act of 1947 and the promotion of safe, efficient, and environmentally sound marine transportation. Panel membership must necessarily include subject-matter experts in the hydrographic sciences and the professional marine transportation community. To open panel membership beyond the disciplines, expertise, and knowledge areas specifically stipulated in 33 U.S.C. 892c would further degrade the visibility and viability of the navigation services within NOAA.

In conclusion, we wish to express appreciation to NOAA leadership for attending and addressing the HSRP regarding NOAA's future direction on Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning and Ocean Policy. The HSRP applauds NOAA's commitment and continued excellent support to the HSRP, particularly for the time that so many take to attend and present at HSRP meetings. The next HSRP meeting will be in Portland, Oregon, on September 14-15, 2010. We would be delighted if you could attend this meeting to meet the Panel working on your behalf.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edmund B. Welch". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Edmund B. Welch, Chair
Hydrographic Services Review Panel

Enclosure

cc: Laura K. Furgione, Assistant Administrator, NOAA Program Planning and
Integration
David M. Kennedy, Acting Assistant Administrator, NOAA National Ocean Service
Jennifer Lukens, Senior Policy Advisor to the Under Secretary of NOAA