



JAN 31 2012

Mr. Edmund Welch  
Chair  
NOAA Hydrographic Services Review Panel  
103 Oronoco Street, Suite 200  
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Dear Mr. Welch:

Thank you for your letter providing a status of the most recent National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP) meeting in Norfolk, Virginia, October 25-27, 2011.

I regret that I was unable to attend the Norfolk meeting, but am very pleased that our Chief of Staff, Margaret Spring, and Deputy Assistant Administrator of the National Ocean Service, Holly Bamford, Ph.D., were both able to meet with the Panel members. I understand that the HSRP site visit, port tour, survey demonstrations, and vessel tours were instrumental in helping the HSRP more fully understand the breadth of NOAA's Navigation Services and their important contribution to the United States economy and safety of maritime commerce.

I would also like to personally thank you for your 2 years of service as the HSRP Chair, and as a member for the past 4 years. I would also like to thank the other four members whose terms expired on January 1, 2012 – CAPT Sherri Hickman; CAPT Thomas Jacobsen; Gary Jeffress, Ph.D; and Ramón Torres Morales –for their expertise and dedicated service to NOAA. Your chairmanship, and the active participation of all the members, has resulted in very productive advisory committee meetings where key stakeholders provided valuable input to help improve NOAA's navigation products, services, and information. I further commend you for your leadership in guiding the HSRP to produce an update to the HSRP's Most Wanted Hydrographic Services Improvements Report. I want to welcome Matt Wellslager, and Scott Perkins as the new Chair and Vice Chair, and look forward to working with them in the future.

I am pleased to see the results of the strategic planning session you held in Norfolk, and of the formation of working groups under the HSRP. The broad work areas you have identified align well with some of NOAA's priorities, and I welcome the HSRP's advice and guidance as you progress toward these goals. The demand for NOAA's products and services is higher than ever, and we are being asked to do more under tightening fiscal constraints. As such, I encourage the HSRP to seek innovative approaches and new opportunities for improved efficiency and effectiveness in how NOAA fulfills its maritime missions.

Your interactions with key maritime stakeholders and other users of NOAA's navigation-related data and services in the Hampton Roads region underscores the importance of maintaining strong partnerships across multiple sectors, especially the private sector.

THE ADMINISTRATOR

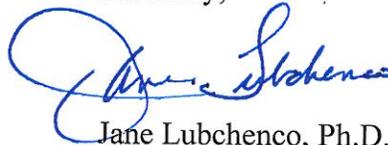


I urge the HSRP to explore ways in which NOAA can further strengthen and expand its collaborations with Federal, State, and non-governmental partners.

NOAA appreciates and values the concerns Stephen Carmel expressed regarding the role of shipping and industry in coastal and marine spatial planning. NOAA has shared these concerns with the National Ocean Council (NOC) staff and has been working at a high level to make the Council on Environmental Quality more aware of this issue. Working with the NOC we will continue to strive for full stakeholder engagement in implementing the National Ocean Policy.

Once again, I extend my appreciation to you for your professional leadership as the HSRP Chair. I look forward to receiving a status report from the Panel on the efforts of the working groups. I hope to be able to meet with all of you at a future HSRP meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jane Lubchenco", with a large, stylized initial "J" and "L".

Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D.  
Under Secretary of Commerce  
for Oceans and Atmosphere