



*Matt Wellslager, Chair
Scott Perkins, Vice Chair*

December 18, 2012

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

The Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP), a NOAA Federal Advisory Committee, is pleased to report on our semiannual meeting that occurred November 27-29, 2012, in New Orleans, LA.

One newly appointed HSRP Panel member, Carol Lockhart, was sworn in by Margaret Spring, Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, NOAA. Carol is eager to have the opportunity to serve on this important federal advisory committee. In her welcoming remarks from NOAA leadership, Under Secretary Spring provided insight into the actions you authorized NOS to make based on the HSRP letter of recommendations from the Anchorage meeting. The panel was pleased to hear about the quick response to those recommendations. David Kennedy, Assistant Administrator, National Ocean Service also addressed the HSRP Panel. David provided to the panel an update about ongoing initiatives in the NOS and introduced us to the new NOS tag line "Positioning America for the Future". Both Margaret and David were present for a majority of the meeting and provided valuable insight to the panel.

During the Keynote Address, provided jointly by Ms. Kelly Schulz, the Vice President of the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau, and Mr. Gary P. LaGrange, President of the Port of New Orleans, the HSRP was briefed on the size and national importance of the Port to commerce in the United States. The Mississippi River watershed connects water based commerce from 31 states, terminating at the Port of New Orleans. The Port of New Orleans, combined with the Port of Southern Louisiana and Baton Rouge, forms one of the largest port systems in the world. The Port of New Orleans ranks first in the U.S., based on the volume of bulk cargo handled. The port is investigating the infrastructure modifications required to accommodate larger ships when the changes to the Panama Canal are complete. Channel maintenance, a key component of Mr. LaGrange's talking points, falls outside the responsibilities of NOAA and the NOS however, changes to shorelines, charting of existing and new aids to navigation, are

required and are included in the responsibilities of the National Ocean Service.

As part of each HSRP meeting, stakeholders, the users of various NOAA products, are invited to address the Panel. During the New Orleans meeting, two stakeholder sessions addressed the HSRP. Topics of the morning session focused primarily on Navigation Services. Speakers for the afternoon session addressed Geospatial topics. Both sessions had speakers address topics specific to Tides, Currents and Water Levels. Using information provided by the stakeholders, the panel had breakout sessions the following day. Panel members led interactive open discussions with local stakeholders to discuss navigation-related issues and identify courses of action for improving the quality of and access to NOAA's navigation data, products, and services for the Gulf of Mexico Region. Three panel sessions were held concurrently. Topics of discussion for the sessions included: Hydrographic Surveying and Charting, Geospatial Positioning, and Tides, Currents and Water Levels. The following recommendations are the outcome of these breakout sessions.

There is significant charting to be accomplished in the region that is outside the major shipping lanes. Most of the region, characterized by highly dynamic shoreline and coastal waters, is covered by some of the oldest surveys of our waters. Updating these surveys is essential for the recreational and commercial fishing interests, for accurate circulation and storm surge modeling, and for environmental monitoring and remediation. Comprehensive charting of these waters requires a thoughtful, coordinated response. Recommendations from the Hydrographic Surveying and Charting session include:

- Review the best practices for NOAA contract surveys – provide longer duration task orders to the more capable contractors, reducing costly mobilizations to the same survey locations.
- A highly visible and aggressive IOCM effort to assess needs, coordinate collection, and ensure centralized (regional) access.
- Crowd sourcing.

Geospatially, the challenges of geodetic control in this dynamic area require innovative solutions. Recommendations include:

- Education and outreach is required at all levels: from the public, to the professional surveyor, to government managers.
- A focused effort to determine best practices for maintaining geodetic control in this dynamic area.
- In the past two years, this HSRP has visited Honolulu, HI, Norfolk, VA, Anchorage AK, and New Orleans, LA. We have heard from Regional Stakeholders and subject experts expressing a very similar message... **The United States needs a consistent means to measure elevation accurately.** The GRAV-D program is the answer. The National Geodetic Survey needs the full support of NOAA/NOS to accelerate the completion of GRAV-D and implement an improved geoid model. Anyone working with spatial data will benefit from this program, and the end product will be a valuable tool in "Positioning America for the Future". This issue is seen as a high priority and should be reviewed in collaboration with NOAA's Sea Grant and the IOOS

FACA, and potentially the National Geospatial Advisory Committee (NGAC) FACA for USGS.

- Outreach to the professional survey and engineering communities should be maintained to increase awareness and confidence in the new geoid model and other NGS products that supply accurate geospatial positioning.

Recommendations from the Tides, Currents and Water Levels were broad and included:

- Interacting with the CMTS to push for the implementation of the integration of NOAA's Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS) into the Automatic Identification System (AIS).
- Work with state leadership to address data needs and gaps as a result of the rapidly changing environment that could be addressed through the RESTORE Act.
- Make COOPs tides and water levels training available to interested parties.
- Create a public campaign to increase congressional awareness of the importance of height accuracy and the necessity of the GRAV-D program. In addition educate flood plain managers and re-insurance companies so that they understand the risk of inaccuracies in height measurements relative to COOPS computed Local Mean Sea Level (LMSL).

Continued emphasis on outreach and education is needed. Great strides have been made with social networking. NOAA and NOS have Facebook pages and links to Twitter. Formal education and personal outreach are still needed.

It seems the major port complex is being adequately serviced by Navigations Services. Interaction between the Navigation Services Manager, Tim Osborne and the geographic region of the Northern Gulf shoreline extending from the Port of Mobile, AL west to the Galveston, TX area, are exceptional.

The HSRP greatly appreciated the participation of senior level NOAA leadership at the meeting. It is our hope that you and your NOAA Leadership Team will read this letter and strongly consider the HSRP recommendations as you plan for 2013 and beyond.

Any questions you may have concerning this letter I will gladly answer to the best of my capabilities.

Sincerely,



Matthew J. Wellslager, Chair
Hydrographic Services Review Panel

cc: Margaret Spring, Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, NOAA, David M. Kennedy, Assistant Administrator, NOAA, National Ocean Service, Dr. Holly Bamford, Deputy Assistant Administrator, NOAA, National Ocean Service