



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
The Under Secretary for  
Oceans and Atmosphere  
Washington, D.C. 20230

FEB 22 2013

Mr. Matt Wellslager  
Chair, Hydrographic Services Review Panel  
South Carolina Geodetic Survey  
5 Geology Road  
Columbia, SC 29212

Dear Mr. Wellslager:

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 New Orleans, Louisiana, November 27-29, 2012.

I regret that I was unable to attend the November HSRP meeting, but appreciate that Ms. Margaret Spring, Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, was available to represent NOAA leadership and conduct the swearing-in of the most recently appointed HSRP Panel member, Ms. Carol Lockhart. Further, I am pleased that Mr. David Kennedy, Deputy Under Secretary for Operations, also attended. Both, Ms. Spring and Mr. Kennedy reported that their interactions with the HSRP in committee discussions and their participation in site visits and tours with local and regional stakeholders/users provided valuable input on the use and application of NOAA's navigation data, products, and services for this region. Please be assured that NOAA continues to benefit from the HSRP's work, and express my thanks to everyone involved.

Through this letter, I would also like to thank Mr. Gary P. LaGrange, President of the Port of New Orleans, and Ms. Kelly Schulz, Vice President of the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau, for conducting the keynote and welcome address to the HSRP and NOAA leadership. It is my understanding that both Mr. LaGrange and Ms. Schulz spoke of the vital importance of NOAA's navigation tools for maritime commerce and other critical activities in the Gulf of Mexico region, specifically the Port of New Orleans and the lower Mississippi river. It is helpful to hear from stakeholders how they are using NOAA's navigation services, data, and information for safe navigation, as well as for dealing with challenges such as port infrastructure expansion, channel maintenance, geospatial leveling inaccuracies, sea level rise and coastal inundation. This feedback allows us to improve the navigation services we provide for them.

I am pleased that the HSRP continues to utilize the valuable information provided through outreach to local and regional stakeholders and users of NOAA's navigation services to help the Panel identify priority issues that NOAA should be addressing. Responding to your specific recommendations, NOAA will consider the following:

THE ADMINISTRATOR



**Recommendation #1: *Hydrographic Surveying and Charting***

- **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.**
  - NOAA Response: NOAA receives excellent service from our hydrographic surveying contract partners. Each year NOAA attempts to balance the need to support surveys in multiple areas by providing task orders to multiple vendors. Some work cannot be extended due to seasonal weather patterns. However, NOAA will continue to review our contracting program and look for ways to improve efficiencies which may include providing longer duration task orders, combining task orders with a single vendor, or other methods.
  
- **A highly visible and aggressive Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping (IOCM) effort to assess needs, coordinate collection, and ensure centralized (regional) access.**
  - NOAA Response: NOAA is reinvigorating its IOCM effort with a newly developed IOCM Road map for 2013 and beyond. This plan includes milestones that cut across the agency, from NOS to the National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA's fleet operations, NOAA data centers, and beyond. The IOCM Road Map covers data acquisition, data stewardship, and maximum use and re-use of data. Outreach to improve coordination and collaboration is a large component of the plan. NOAA also serves as the Executive Secretariat for the Interagency Working Group on Ocean and Coastal Mapping, which is charged to coordinate IOCM efforts across Federal mapping agencies.
  
- **Crowd sourcing.**
  - NOAA Response: The IOCM staff and NOAA's Office of Coast Survey (OCS) are studying the potential opportunities offered by crowd-sourcing of hydrographic data acquisition. NOAA has a long tradition of crowd-sourcing chart feature corrections, e.g. U.S. Power Squadron chart discrepancy reports. OCS is currently assessing different hydrographic crowd-sourcing data systems. NOAA's IOCM staff is developing minimum standards and protocols for hydrographic data acquisition by non-traditional providers such as the U.S. Coast Guard, contract fishing fleet, and wind energy interests.

**Recommendation #2: *Geodetic control and measurement accuracy***

- **Education and outreach is required at all levels: from the public, to the professional surveyor, to government managers.**
  - NOAA Response: The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) has developed a new strategic plan for fiscal years (FY) 2013-FY2023 which has as one of its four major mission goals: “Expand the National Spatial Reference System stakeholder base through partnerships, education, and outreach.”
- **The National Geodetic Survey needs the full support of NOAA/NOS to accelerate the completion of GRAV-D and implement an improved geoid model.**
  - NOAA Response: The GRAV-D project is on track for the completion of phase one, in 2022 at current funding levels. This airborne campaign will collect a one-time snapshot of gravity for the entire U.S. and territories. Collection will cover 25 percent of the country within a few months of this year, including almost all of the Great Lakes, over 50 percent of Alaska, most of the Gulf Coast, and large areas of the East and West Coasts. The GRAV-D project will continue to partner with the NGS Height Modernization program to provide information on GRAV-D and the new vertical datum to the surveying community across the country.
- **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.**
  - NOAA Response: In FY 2013, the NGS has developed an updated Strategic Plan for the National Height Modernization Program which will facilitate outreach and awareness to the professional surveying and engineering communities. NGS plans to establish a process for maintaining accurate heights in dynamic areas like the Gulf Region by monitoring vertical motion to update the geoid model and other related NGS products and services. More specifically, NGS plans to define and implement a process to incorporate vertical velocities in the analysis, adjustment, and publication of geodetic vertical control.

**Recommendation #3: *Tides, Currents and Water Levels***

- **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).**

- NOAA Response: NOAA and the USCG are committed to the completion of the distribution of NOAA's PORTS information via the USCG's AIS. The initial testing of this system has been successfully completed in Tampa, Florida, and on the Columbia River, Oregon. Program managers for both NOAA's PORTS and the USCG AIS are currently meeting to implement this program. Initial capability will be incorporated at VTS centers by the end of FY 2014. As the Coast Guard implements their Nationwide AIS capability, the transmission of this environmental information will be expanded to areas outside VTS coverage areas.
- **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.**
  - NOAA Response: All three Navigation Service offices are working with local, State, and other officials to determine what data needs and gaps might best be collaboratively addressed through the RESTORE Act. The Navigation Manager and State Geodetic Advisors in the Gulf Coast region will be particularly important in this effort. The offices are also working through NOAA to determine the best way to participate in this process:
- **Make CO-OPS' tides and water levels training available to interested parties.**
  - NOAA Response: CO-OPS is coordinating with OCS to make available, on a space available basis, training at the annual in-house hydrographic survey training which includes a tides and water levels component. We are both also working with NOAA's Acquisition and Grants Office to see what contract modifications might be needed to facilitate access to training by NOAA contractors.
  - CO-OPS also periodically provides a Tides and Water Levels for Surveying and Mapping training course conducted specifically for the general public. This course is being offered this February and notices have been sent out.
- **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 CO-OPS' computed Local Mean Sea Level (LMSL).**
  - NOAA Response: NGS will continue to make presentations and conduct workshops at the professional conferences for the geospatial and imagery community. Furthermore, NGS leverages State advisors, State geodetic coordinators, and regional geodetic advisors to spread the word to the State and local transportation communities. NGS also works with academics at universities around the country. A recent two-part series in Professional Surveyor Magazine

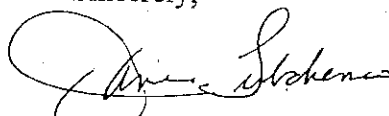
entitled "Gravity's Increasing Gravititas" discusses the GRAV-D project and the role of gravity in land surveying and helps inform a wider audience. As intermediate geoid models are developed and released for regional areas, the benefits of the GRAV-D project will become more apparent at the State and local scale. The goal is to inform Congress about the importance of height accuracy and the necessity of the GRAV-D project through the education of their constituency.

- NGS has worked to increase Congressional and public awareness of the socio-economic benefits of NGS products and services. In March 2012, NGS released the results of an independent socio-economic scoping study on the NGS Coastal Mapping Program (CMP). The Study provided information on the CMP's customers, applications, preliminary order of magnitude estimates of the value of CMP products and services, and an estimate of the number of jobs supported. In June 2009, NGS rolled out, in the form of a briefing to Congressional staffers, a January 2009 independent socio-economic benefits study scoping the value of the CORS and GRAV-D programs.
- NGS routinely works with Congressional stakeholders in response to their inquiries and requests that come through NOAA Legislative Affairs.
- NGS has public outreach activities planned for FY 2013 that include:
  - Engage Real-Time Network operators at a national workshop or webinar
  - Conduct outreach to the GIS community at two ESRI events (one in a Federal user conference in Washington, DC, and the other at the international user conference in California)
  - Height Mod forums and workshops
  - State specific conferences and other outreach activities which NGS' State geodetic advisors participate in.
  - HSRP meetings
  - Federal Geodetic Control Subcommittee meetings
- NGS will host webinars providing updates on GRAV-D which will be held annually in order to maintain outreach to the professional survey and engineering communities, among others.

NOAA is pleased that the HSRP has visited the Gulf of Mexico region and listened to the needs of our stakeholders and users of this vitally important area. Please be assured that NOAA's Navigation Services Offices' are committed to supporting and implementing the panel's recommendations.

Please extend my appreciation to the entire HSRP for its ongoing dedication to supporting and strengthening NOAA's navigation services, I look forward to hearing further recommendations from the committee and its working groups that will help NOAA address challenging issues of navigation services as we move forward with improving our products, services and information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane Lubchenco". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "L".

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

cc: Gary P. LaGrange, President of the Port of New Orleans

Kelly Schulz, Vice President of the New Orleans Convention & Visitors Bureau