

July 2006

Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr. (USN-Ret.)
Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and
NOAA Administrator
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Admiral Lautenbacher:

The Hydrographic Services Improvement Act (HSIA) of 1998 and amendments of 2002 were created, among other things, to provide guidance for implementation of programs and authorizations for appropriations under NOAA's National Ocean Service.

Responsibilities of the Administrator under the HSIA include the acquisition and dissemination of hydrographic data; the promulgation of standards for hydrographic data used by the Administration in providing hydrographic services; the promulgation of standards for hydrographic services used by the Administration, to ensure comprehensive geographic coverage of hydrographic services, in cooperation with other appropriate Federal agencies; the maintenance in a national database of hydrographic data, in cooperation with other appropriate Federal agencies; to provide hydrographic services in uniform, easily accessible formats; to participate in the development of, and implement for the United States in cooperation with other appropriate Federal agencies, international standards for hydrographic data and hydrographic services; and, to the greatest extent practicable and cost-effective, fulfill these responsibilities through contracts or other agreements with private sector entities. The HSIA also created the Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP).

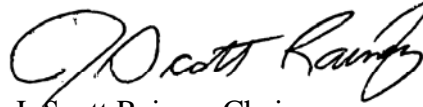
The HSRP unanimously and wholeheartedly supports the reauthorization of the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act of 2002. The HSIA has been an important mandate in support of navigation service programs and navigation safety and efficiencies. The navigation service programs authorized in the HSIA are reported by NOAA to be the "backbone" of an Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) and the HSRP supports the provision that the Administrator shall, design, install, maintain, and operate real-time hydrographic monitoring systems to enhance navigation safety and efficiency and in support of IOOS.

As the HSIA expires at the end of Fiscal Year 2007, the HSRP recommends that a five year authorization from FY 2008 through FY 2012 be supported at funding levels commensurate with the continued need to address real time hydrographic

observations and continuation of HSRP, among other critical hydrographic needs and interests.

The HSRP recommends that NOAA begin immediate and serious deliberations to provide Congress with Agency views or other appropriate communication to facilitate reauthorization in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Scott Rainey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "J." being particularly prominent.

J. Scott Rainey, Chair
Hydrographic Services Review Panel