



HYDROGRAPHIC SERVICES REVIEW PANEL

Sean M. Duffy, Sr. Chair
Nathan Wardwell, Vice Chair

December 5, 2024

Dr. Richard W. Spinrad
Under Secretary of Commerce for
Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Dr. Spinrad,

The 2024 Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP) fall meeting was hosted at the Detroit Wayne County Port Authority on the bank of the Detroit River. Panel members were excited to meet in person, as virtual meetings cannot replicate the connections formed during in-person interactions. The HSRP greatly appreciates the efforts of all staff and leadership, particularly Ms. Rachael Dempsey, Deputy Assistant Administrator for the National Ocean Service (NOS), Dr. Marian Westley, Director of the Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS), Dr. Shachak Pe'eri, Acting Director of the National Geodetic Survey (NGS), and Rear Admiral (RDML) Benjamin Evans, Director of Coast Survey and Designated Federal Officer for the HSRP.

The HSRP meeting addressed multiple high-priority topics, with introductory videos from Senator Peters and Representative Thaender. Special thanks were extended to HSRP member Eric Peace for securing the excellent meeting venue and arranging multiple educational outings. The economic value of the 60 deep draft ports connected by the Great Lakes was reported to collectively support \$6 trillion in annual commerce.

Discussions included a recap of NOS navigation services offices' (OCS, NGS, and CO-OPS) emergency responses to the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge. Their coordinated surveys and data provided critical information that aided agencies during the recovery effort and was used to reopen navigation channels. Updates on NOAA's VDatum program underscored its critical role in the disaster response. HSRP members emphasized the need for increased base funding for NOAA's navigation services, as funding constraints hamper maritime safety and disaster response capabilities.

Dr. Larry Mayer of the Center for Ocean Mapping/NOAA University of New Hampshire Joint Hydrographic Center provided updates on his recent Arctic voyage. Connections were made between his findings and challenges with saltwater migration in the Mississippi River along with the combined effects of advanced glacial melt and vertical land motion on accelerating sea level rise.

There were updates on the progress of the International Great Lakes Datum and addressing isostatic rebound, the new CO-OPS Air Gap Policy, influenced by lessons learned from the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse, advances in the Custom Chart Tool (Version 3.0) and beneficial use of the RDML Richard T. Brennan Matching Fund.

Regional speakers highlighted the value of NOAA Navigation Services and interagency collaboration in the Great Lakes. Discussions focused on the need for a comprehensive Great Lakes mapping strategy, technical challenges related to vertical datums.

The disparity between inadequate federal appropriations for navigation, observation, and positioning programs and their significant economic value to the maritime sector were a common talking point referenced throughout the meeting. During disasters, other agencies depend on updated remote sensing data from NGS, updated nautical charts from OCS, and real-time tide and current information from CO-OPS to inform recovery and rebuilding efforts. Transportation closures and delays have substantial social and economic impacts, making NOS navigation services indispensable.

The HSRP recommends that NOAA consider the following:

1. ***Restore and Increase Federal Base Resources for National Ocean Service Navigation Products and Services***
 - Enhance appropriations for NOAA PORTS[®], NWLON, and VDatum
 - Establish dedicated and new funding for education and outreach
 - Increased support of the NGS Geospatial Modeling Grants and the Center of Excellence for Ocean and Great Lakes Mapping.
 - Expand VDatum coverage for Alaska and Pacific Islands to support underserved regions.
2. ***Conduct an Impact Study on NOS Navigation Products and Services***
 - Assess the economic significance of NOS navigation products and services and their role as critical infrastructure for the U.S. The Detroit meeting highlighted regional reliance on the International Great Lakes Datum and NOS disaster responses.
3. ***Develop a Great Lakes Mapping Strategy.***
 - Take a comprehensive approach to mapping the Great Lakes, one of the least mapped regions in the U.S., to support maritime safety and commerce.

The HSRP looks forward to meeting in the Spring 2025 in the Florida.

Sincerely,



Sean M. Duffy Sr.
Chair, HSRP.



Nathan Wardwell
Vice Chair, HSRP

Attachment:
HSRP Priority Matrix