



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

December 21, 2020

Mr. Edward J. Saade  
Chairman  
Hydrographic Services Review Panel  
14479 Maplewood Street  
Poway, CA 92064

Dear Mr. Saade:

Thank you for the Hydrographic Services Review Panel (HSRP) recommendation letter and two position papers following your public meeting on September 23-24, 2020. The HSRP discussions and public comments during the 2-day webinar were robust, and I appreciate the panel members' participation.

It is clear that HSRP put a great deal of time and effort into the two position papers with recommendations for implementing plans for the National Ocean Mapping Exploration and Characterization Strategy (NOMECE) and the Alaska Coastal Mapping Strategy (ACMS). The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) will review the challenges, the advice and recommendations shared by HSRP, and will share your papers with our interagency partners on the NOMECE Council and the Alaska Mapping Executive Committee (AMECE).

As you know, NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS) is actively engaged in developing implementation plans for both strategies through our leadership roles on the NOMECE Council and AMECE. I appreciate HSRP's extensive feedback on the NOMECE strategy and on the objective for a Standard Ocean Mapping Protocol (SOMP). In October 2020, NOAA and its partners on the Interagency Working Group on Ocean and Coastal Mapping (IWG-OCM) hosted a SOMP symposium to gather expert stakeholder input on what a protocol should include. Public engagement continues to be a priority and the NOMECE Council held public listening sessions on November 16 and 18, 2020, for stakeholders to comment on the NOMECE implementation plan. HSRP's recommendations for ACMS on mapping priorities, costs, and establishing standards and protocols to ensure coastal mapping data consistency will help NOAA and our partners clarify roles and next steps to execute the plan.

I look forward to our continued dialogue on topics from your recent meeting, including public private partnerships and uncrewed systems (UxS). I continue to follow HSRP's focus on the challenges of navigation with restricted visibility in fog; the use of real time visibility sensors via NOAA's PORTS<sup>®</sup> program; the data and services being developed for precision marine navigation; and their contributions to maritime commerce and the blue economy.

THE ADMINISTRATOR



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I understand you are interested in encouraging and following the interagency and private partnerships related to NOAA's navigation and hydrographic operations. NOAA plays a key leadership role in U.S. mapping and surveying and works closely with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Coast Guard, and other Federal partners through interagency groups (e.g., the NOME Council, the IWG-OCM, and the U.S. Committee on the Marine Transportation System) in this effort. NOAA is also working closely with the newly created coastal subcommittee under AMEC, as NOAA's National Geodetic Survey is integral to implementing the ACMS.

We rely on a range of UxS to advance and support the NOAA mission, as well as NOS' hydrographic and navigation services. As you noted, UxS have been particularly useful for operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. NOAA will continue to provide regular updates on the agency's UxS applications across the United States and the Arctic.

I look forward to our continued engagement with HSRP.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Neil A. Jacobs', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Neil A. Jacobs, Ph.D.  
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for  
Environmental Observations and Prediction  
Performing the Duties of  
Under Secretary of Commerce  
for Oceans and Atmosphere