

Communications Plan
**Ocean.US and Integrated Ocean
Observing System**

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Background

Now in its fourth year of existence, the Ocean.US office has been communicating with many audiences for a variety of purposes, but without the benefit of a formal, written communications plan.

A communications plan is like a road map, a guide to help make decisions. It paints a picture of the preferred future and describes actions that will be taken to arrive at that destination. By setting goals and identifying priorities, a communications plan allows the staff to function in a proactive manner, not simply reacting to the multitude of communications possibilities that exist or might be suggested by others. A good plan provides a screening mechanism by which staff can evaluate ideas and opportunities.

The U.S. Global Ocean Observing System Steering Committee (USGSC), which provides guidance to the Ocean.US office, requested that it create a communications plan to assist them in their interactions with the audiences critical to their success in developing and implementing a successful Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS).

The author developed this plan based on interviews with Ocean.US staff and members of the USGSC. Topics discussed included critical audiences, goals of a communications effort, messages to be conveyed to key audiences, communications activities to date and immediate communications product needs.

1.2 Key Audiences

Key audiences are those groups or individuals who make the decisions and/or take the actions that determine the continued success of an organization. Identifying your key audiences and understanding as much as possible about their existing attitudes toward your organization and determining the most effective ways to communicate with them are critical to developing effective communications strategies.

Ocean.US's key audiences are listed below. They all are critical to the success of Ocean.US and IOOS, and are not in priority order.

White House, Office of Management of Budget and Office of Science and Technology Policy—In order for IOOS to succeed, it must have the support of the Administration at the highest level.

U.S. Congress—Ultimately, it is the Congress that will decide whether IOOS will come into being and receive adequate funding.

National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) Agencies—The IOOS will not be successful without the sustained and enthusiastic support of the agencies making up the NOPP.

Researchers and Operational Groups—Researchers must understand that operational oceanography will benefit their science and will not be in competition with funding for research.

Commercial Sector Providers—The support of current commercial-sector providers of environmental information, telecommunications services, data management and others can be invaluable; conversely, if they oppose the program, they can negatively influence its future.

Educators and Training Groups—Educators at all levels should have access to data and information from IOOS to inform our future citizens and decision-makers about the marine environment.

Potential Users of IOOS Products—Users of IOOS products must be made aware of the potential value of these products so that they will contribute to product development and marketing, specify requirements for data and product delivery and be advocates for the program.

Our Partners in Development of the Regional Associations—IOOS must be developed at the grassroots level with the involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations, government agencies, academia, industry and the public.

1.3 Goals

Goals are the long-range desired outcomes or end results of our communications efforts. Strategic communications can play an important role in helping accomplish several of Ocean.US's organizational goals. They fall roughly in four areas:

Gaining Authorization and Funding of IOOS

Goal I. Support of IOOS by the Administration

Goal II. Broad Congressional recognition of U.S. ocean, estuarine and Great Lakes issues and support of IOOS

Sub-Goal 1. Congressional authorization of IOOS and a workable governance structure as recommended in the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's report

Sub-Goal 2. Sustained support for the IOOS, including its Regional Associations and National Federation of Regional Associations, through long-term funding as a budget line item rather than earmarks for individual observing system elements

Goal III. Sustained and enthusiastic support of IOOS by all NOPP agencies, including engaging in the four-year Ocean.US planning and budgeting cycle for IOOS and adhering to the implementation plan

Sub-Goal 1. Signing of IOOS MOA by all NOPP agencies

Sub-Goal 2. Enthusiastic participation by NOPP agencies in regular planning and budgeting meetings including Regional Associations as participants

Sub-Goal 3. Submission by NOPP agencies of appropriation requests in support of IOOS goals and objectives

Sub-Goal 4. Expenditure by NOPP agencies of IOOS appropriations in accordance with the Implementation Plan

Gaining Broad Participation in the Planning and Implementation of IOOS

Goal IV. Development and implementation of national standards and protocols for measurements, data management and communications and modeling.

Goal V. Broad and sustained participation in planning and implementing the IOOS to include federal agencies, state and local governments, commercial sector providers, the education community, NGOs and other end users

Forming Successful Regional Associations

Goal VI. Successful formation of broad-based, fully funded Regional Associations and a National Federation of Regional Associations

Creating Advocacy for IOOS

Goal VII. Advocacy for the IOOS by participants and users

Strengthening the Communications Effort

Goal VIII. A coordinated, consistent and professional communications effort that effectively delivers IOOS messages to its key audiences

1.4 Messages

Messages are the concepts an organization wants its key audiences to know and feel about it. They express, in a nutshell, core ideas about the organization. Message statements provide guidance to those preparing communications products, ensuring that the information being communicated about the organization is consistent and supportive of its goals.

Messages One through Three are “big picture” messages, suitable for all audiences. They describe IOOS as a coordinated, multi-agency system that will provide systematic, reliable and easy-to-use information and services that are critical to U.S. interests and will improve Americans’ quality of life. Also, IOOS’s integrated approach is cost-effective and can deal with complex problems.

Messages Four through Twenty-Four are targeted at specific key audiences (described above in 1.2). These specialized messages address the audiences’ misconceptions or concerns about IOOS, describe how IOOS will benefit them, and encourage participation in the development of the IOOS.

1.5 Recommended Priority Communications Actions

The Ocean.US staff must prepare a plan of action for carrying out the objectives and activities recommended in this communications plan. Ocean.US's organizational goals, along with communications objectives to help reach them, are listed in 1.6, below. Due to staffing limitations, it will not be possible to carry out all these suggested activities simultaneously, so priorities must be assigned. An accompanying document, "*Ocean.US Communications Work Sheet*" presents the objectives and activities in tabular form, indicating priority, person responsible, deadline and status.

Immediate

1. Get the IOOS message to decision-makers
2. Add communications expertise to Ocean.US staff
3. Enhance electronic communications capabilities

Medium-Term

1. Provide communications support and other assistance to developing Regional Associations
2. Increase level of two-way communications with potential users
3. Encourage advocacy for IOOS among potential users and participants

1.6 Goals and Supporting Objectives

While goals describe where we would like to be, objectives say how we will get there. They are the activities, tasks and actions we will take to accomplish the goals. Suggested objectives to help accomplish Ocean.US' goals are listed here:

Goal I. Support of IOOS by the Administration

- Objective A. Brief President's Science Advisor and leadership of Office of Management and Budget on the IOOS.

Goal II. Broad Congressional recognition of U.S ocean, estuarine and Great Lakes issues and support of IOOS

- Objective A. Make and maintain personal contacts with Members/staff of the appropriate House and Senate Committees and the Ocean Caucus.
- Objective B. Create a section of the Ocean.US website that reinforces information provided to legislators/elected officials, perhaps by region—"Inside the Beltway."
- Objective C. Write op-ed pieces for local papers in the Members' districts. If they mention the local Member's role in the activity or on the relevant committee, they will be clipped and sent to the Member and his/her staff.

Goal III. Sustained and enthusiastic support of IOOS by all NOPP agencies, including engaging in the four-year Ocean.US planning and budgeting cycle for IOOS and adhering to the implementation plan

- Objective A. Develop and implement a communications strategy that focuses on heads of the NOPP agencies, legislative affairs officers, managers of different sectors of each agency and managers of operational units across the nation.
- Objective B. Develop and implement a communications strategy that focuses on those individuals in the NOPP agencies who will participate in the Ocean.US planning process as described in Part One of the IOOS Development Plan, Section 3.3 The Planning Process.

Goal IV. Development and implementation of national standards and protocols for measurements, data management and communications and modeling consistent with the IOOS Data Management and Communications (DMAC) Plan

- Objective A. Engage data providers (operators of observing systems or elements thereof) in the development of standards and protocols.
- Objective B. Enable compliance with national standards and protocols by all contributors to the IOOS.

Goal V. Broad and sustained participation in planning and implementing the IOOS to include federal agencies, state and local governments, private sectors, the education community, NGOs and other end users

- Objective A. Form Regional and National Advisory (Outreach) Councils with the assistance of the National Sea Grant Association's IOOS Work Group.
- Objective B. Create a section on the Ocean.US web site aimed at potential users—"IOOS Products and Services."
- Objective C. Attract potential users to Ocean.US web site to build awareness of IOOS and receive input regarding desired products.
- Objective D. Identify a person on the Ocean.US staff as the principal contact for industry.
- Objective E. Establish sustained forums that facilitate exchange of information among data users and providers.

Goal VI. Successful formation of broad-based, fully funded Regional Associations and a National Federation of Regional Associations

- Objective A. Support those working to develop Regional Associations.
- Objective B. Increase communications from the Ocean.US office to the entities in the coastal states who are involved in the development of Regional Associations, such as governors, state agencies, boards, NGOs, etc.

Goal VII. Advocacy for the IOOS by participants and users

- Objective A. Seek the support of national associations that represent major potential users
- Objective B. Seek the support of major companies who feel positively toward IOOS.
- Objective C. Make presentations at industry trade meetings and scientific meetings.

Goal VIII. A coordinated, consistent and professional communications effort that effectively delivers IOOS messages to its key audiences

- Objective A. Redesign and streamline the Ocean.US and IOOS web sites to be user-oriented and to convey not only important documents and news about IOOS's development, but also information that will reinforce the key messages expressed in this plan.
- Objective B. Redesign the Ocean.US electronic newsletter, *Ocean Views*, and expand its distribution list to include the appropriate members of all key audiences.
- Objective C. Hire a full-time, trained, experienced communications professional for the Ocean.US staff.
- Objective D. Prepare articles for release to mass and trade media

1.7 Evaluation

Evaluating the effectiveness of communications effort is challenging, as it often involves trying to measure changes in attitudes. It is essential that we have a clear idea of what outcomes we expect from our communications activities and that those outcomes be expressed as clearly articulated goals that are realistic and do-able. Without knowing where we are trying to go, we cannot measure whether we have arrived there.

Evaluation can take place while communications projects are underway in order to make necessary adjustments and at significant milestones as the project continues. A variety of accepted techniques and methods exist to measure desired behavioral outcomes of a communications plan:

Publication studies—Readership surveys can be performed periodically of not only printed publications, but also web sites and other electronic communications.

Media searches/data retrieval—Internet search engines are powerful tools to seek out what is being written about your organization and in what publications. Many major news outlets have on-line versions.

Focus groups—These small groups of carefully selected participants can provide information about attitudes toward your organization and/or its products and services, as well as about your communications products.

Interviews—Face-to-face meetings with members of key audiences are inexpensive, but effective, ways to measure desired outcomes like enhanced relationships. Meetings with key groups in which their input is solicited are a form of “interview,” and can be very revealing.

Communications audit—This is the most comprehensive form of measurement. It is an organization-wide study of the communication philosophy, concepts, structure, flow and practice within it, using interviews, focus groups and surveys.

Ocean.US staff should build in evaluation mechanisms in critical activities and products, such as the Web site and printed brochures and be alert to cost-effective opportunities to measure and evaluate all communications activities.

2.0 Preface

2.1 Introduction

What is a communications plan and why does the Ocean.US office need one? A communications plan is like a road map, a guide to help make decisions. It paints a picture of the preferred future and describes actions that will be taken to arrive at that destination. A communications plan should be based on the organization's goals and show how communications can help achieve them.

Modern technology offers unlimited communications options, but no organization has unlimited financial and human resources. Choices must be made, and a communications plan provides the basis for them.

By setting goals and identifying priorities, a communications plan allows the staff to function in a proactive manner, not simply reacting to the multitude of communications possibilities that exist or might be suggested by others. A good plan provides a "screening mechanism" by which staff can evaluate ideas and opportunities.

By involving all those who are going to carry out the plan in its development from the beginning, the planning process creates agreement about priorities, important audiences, goals and messages to be delivered. The plan then provides an agreed-upon backdrop by which to decide what activities will be undertaken.

2.2 Background

2.2.1 *Ocean.US and IOOS*

Ocean.US, the National Office for Integrated and Sustained Ocean Observations, was established in October 2000 through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) among selected members of the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP).

NOPP was established by Congress in 1997. Its purpose is to "promote the national goals of assuring national security, advancing economic development, protecting the quality of life, and strengthening science and education through improved knowledge of the ocean" and to "coordinate and strengthen oceanographic efforts" to achieve these goals by "identifying and carrying out partnerships among Federal agencies, academic, industry, and other members of the oceanographic community in areas of data, resources, education, and communications."

The National Ocean Research Leadership Council (NORLC), the governing body of NOPP, was established to (1) prescribe policies and procedures to implement the NOPP; (2) review, select, and identify and allocate funds for partnership projects; and (3) assess whether there is a need for a facility to provide national centralization of oceanographic data. The NORLC consists of the heads of 15 federal agencies involved in ocean research, monitoring and/or policy development. Thus, the NORLC represents the interests of federal agencies in the design and implementation of the **Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS)**.

IOOS is a coordinated network of observations, data management and analyses that systematically acquires and disseminates data and information of past, present and

futures states of the oceans and the nation's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), estuaries and Great Lakes. It is the United States component of the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS), a world-wide intergovernmental program whose planning and implementation began more than a decade ago. The U.S. contribution to GOOS accelerated in 1998 with the creation of the U.S. GOOS Steering Committee (USGSC), a non-governmental body composed of representatives from industry, academia, state and federal government and non-governmental organizations. The USGSC provides guidance to the Ocean.US office as it works to develop the IOOS.

Oversight by a body external to any given federal agency is needed to achieve the vision of an integrated and sustained observing system. As mentioned above, Ocean.US was established in October 2000 as the NOPP interagency office for integrated and sustained ocean observations. The Memorandum of Agreement articulates Ocean.US's responsibilities as follows:

“The mission of Ocean.US is to *‘integrate existing and planned elements to establish a sustained ocean observing system to meet common research and operational agency needs.’* [emphasis added] Ocean.US is to serve as the national focal point for integrating ocean activities and will establish and have responsibility for the ocean observation federation and, as it evolves, other appropriate components of a more encompassing ocean observation and prediction system.”

The MOA creating Ocean.US requires that the NORLC establish an Executive Committee (EXCOM) to provide “policy guidance, ensure sustained agency support, and approve implementing documents.”

In mid-2003, members of the USGSC encouraged Ocean.US to create a communications plan to assist in their interactions with the many and varied audiences with which they must work to develop and implement a successful Integrated Ocean Observing System.

2.2.2 Developing the Communications Plan

An effective communications plan has the consensus of those who are going to carry it out, the approval of management and a way of evaluating its success. The process of developing this plan began with input from professional staff of Ocean.US and members of the USGSC. I met with Ocean.US staff (Larry Atkinson, Pat Dennis, Eric Lindstrom, Tom Malone, Blanche Meeson and Kristine Stump) in September 2003.

A summary of our discussion is found as Appendix A. Some of the major points made are presented here:

What are we “selling,” Ocean.US or IOOS, or both?

The focus should be on IOOS, but Ocean.US needs recognition within the Federal agencies. We need support for the idea of IOOS and recognition of the fact that without Ocean.US, IOOS will not come about.

Who are our critical/key audiences and why?

U.S Congress—We want passage of appropriate U.S. Congressional legislation to help in the development and implementation of IOOS. In the House, we need awareness of IOOS and a commitment to support it. [Note: Subsequently, SB 1400 was passed in October 2003 and sent to the House. It is assigned to four committees, see Key Audiences section.]

NOPP agencies—We need them to continue to provide funds and personnel to Ocean.US. We need support to implement and maintain IOOS. We need the support of all of the NOPP agencies; some do not yet see that IOOS is of value to them.

Academics who conduct observing systems—They must be convinced to transition pre-operational observing elements to operational status, closing the process of earmarking to obtain their support. We must demonstrate the value of IOOS to the research community.

Potential users of IOOS products—They must be made aware of the potential value of the products to be developed by IOOS so that (1) they can be advocates for the program, and (2) they can provide input into the observational system and the product development process.

What are some of the goals of a communications effort?

- Sustained political support for IOOS at the federal, state and local levels.
- Coordinated and phased development of an IOOS.
- Interagency cooperation in the funding effort.

In November 2003, I attended a meeting of the U.S. GOOS Steering Committee to make a presentation on the communications planning process and the status of the Ocean.US/IOOS Communications Plan. I gained valuable insights and information about communications needs and opportunities.

In January of 2004, I met with members of the U.S. GOOS Steering Committee (Worth Nowlin, Linda Sheehan, Ed Harrison, Bob Cohen) and Kristine Stump of Ocean.US to gain their input for the development of message statements for this plan. Notes from that meeting may be found as Appendix B.

This group discussed critical messages that must be conveyed to key audiences, especially decision-makers and potential users. They expressed the idea that IOOS needs a strong identity, including a “slogan,” such as:

“IOOS: The Ocean Information Network”

Needed communications products were discussed, including one-page examples of IOOS “success stories,” articles for distribution to trade media, the Ocean.US web site and an IOOS web site.

2.3 Contents of the Plan

Although the structure of written communications plans vary greatly, all contain certain common elements:

- A statement of the mission of the communications effort
- A list of key audiences

An assessment of the current communications program/effort
Goals (long-range)
Key messages to be delivered
Communications needs and priorities
Objectives (short-term)
A plan of action
Methods for evaluating success

The “Goals and Supporting Objectives” section lists communications tasks (objectives) that can be undertaken to contribute to the accomplishment of each identified goal. The objectives listed there also appear in a companion document, “*Ocean.US Communications Work Sheet.*”

Ocean.US staff may undertake some of these tasks, others may be outsourced to contractors and still others may be carried out by “advocates” working on behalf of Ocean.US and IOOS. Thus, the Ocean.US staff must make some fundamental decisions and assignments in order to complete and carry out an effective communications plan.

This plan is a living document. It reflects the views, as of October 2004, of Ocean.US staff and leadership regarding the direction its communications effort should take over the coming year and a half to two years. The purpose of any communications program must be to advance the goals of the organization, and those goals can and will change over time. Accordingly, the communications plan must be re-visited on a regular basis (at least annually) as Ocean.US and IOOS’s needs and priorities evolve.

As IOOS comes into being as an established program, the plan will evolve from a communications plan for Ocean.US to carry out in support of IOOS, to a communications plan for the IOOS itself.

3.0 Mission

The mission of the communications effort of Ocean.US is:

To plan and implement a communications strategy that will strengthen the relationships between Ocean.US and its many key audiences, thereby enhancing its ability to carry out its mission.

4.0 Key Audiences and Current Efforts

Identifying key audiences is a critical early step in developing a communications plan. Organizations want “everyone” or “the public” to know about and appreciate them, their products and services. This is an unrealistic expectation, considering the millions of people making up the American public and the multitude of messages that bombard them daily. An organization must first decide which “publics,” or “audiences” are most critical to its existence.

Key Audiences are those groups or individuals who make the decisions and/or take the actions that determine the continued success of your organization and program. These are the people who must know who you are, what you are doing and what your products and services are.

Knowing who your key audiences are and knowing such critical information about them as (1) their attitudes, predispositions and prejudices; (2) where they get their information; and (3) the most effective ways to reach them, will help you communicate more effectively. It will allow you to communicate at their level in language they use and understand and to relate what your organization does to their interests.

IOOS’s Key Audiences, the decisions and actions we want them to take and our current communications with them are described in this section. All are critical to Ocean.US’s and IOOS’s success and are not listed in priority order.

4.1 White House, Office of Management and Budget and Office of Science and Technology Policy

4.1.1 Why are they a key audience?

In order for IOOS to succeed, it must have the support of the Administration at the highest level, including the White House, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP). Congress must see that IOOS is a priority of the Administration and then authorize and fund the program. These key audiences must have a broad understanding of what the program is and what its value will be to the economy and society. Also, we need the Administration to encourage agency heads to budget the funds to support IOOS.

4.1.2 What are the challenges?

Communicating with these offices will be challenging, as they are difficult to reach. Although the OMB and OSTP are National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) agencies, they often do not attend meetings or are not represented by high-level personnel.

4.1.3 What are we doing now?

Direct contact takes place only when reports are requested, i.e., the Ocean.US Director has made sporadic reports to CEQ and OSTP, and has had occasional meetings with OMB.

4.2 U.S Congress including the Ocean Caucus

4.2.1 Why are they a key audience?

Ultimately, it is the Congress that will decide whether IOOS will come into being and receive adequate funding. With the Senate passage of SB1400, the Ocean Observations Act, the future of authorization legislation for IOOS now is in the hands of four committees: the House Resources Committee (designated the lead committee), House Science Committee, House Armed Services Committee and House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.

The first action we want is authorization of IOOS and the required governance structure. The next step will be funding of the program and implementation of the Ocean Commission recommendations for implementing and managing the IOOS. In the long run, we want sustained support for the IOOS, the Regional Associations and the National Federation of Regional Associations. We want provision of long-term funding as line items in agencies' budgets rather than as earmarks for individual observing systems.

We must provide Members information necessary for them to develop a broad understanding of the marine issues facing the United States and of the contributions the IOOS program will make to address them.

4.2.2 What are the challenges?

The challenges that will be encountered include the reality that Congressional appropriations are "turfy" and fragmented. What advantage will a particular committee see in supporting IOOS within the agencies under its oversight, particularly if it cannot claim to be the "lead" in IOOS? Also, some Members may not understand the relationship between IOOS and National Science Foundation (NSF) Ocean Observatories Initiative (OOI) or other initiatives dealing with long-term observations.

4.2.3 What are we doing now?

Ocean.US, as a federal interagency office, is precluded from "lobbying" the Congress. Communications with members and staff is maintained by agencies' legislative affairs staff as well as by third parties, including the legislative liaisons from the Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education (CORE), Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System (GoMOOS), Gulf of Alaska Ecosystem Monitoring Program (GEM) and other developing observing system elements.

At the request of House staff, the Director has briefed them on the Ocean.US five-year budget for IOOS development, taking into account the U.S. Commission of Ocean Policy's (USCOP) Preliminary Report released April 20, 2004.

4.3 National Oceanographic Partnership Program Agencies

4.3.1 Why are they a key audience?

The IOOS will not be successful without the sustained and enthusiastic support of the agencies making up the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP). First, this means that all NOPP agencies must sign the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) creating Ocean.US and continue to provide funds and personnel to the office. Not only must the NOPP agency heads support the IOOS development plan and components such as the Data Management and Communications (DMAC) plan, they must direct their subordinates to implement them and to budget the required added funds to support IOOS

activities. Furthermore, NOPP agencies must accept major responsibility for development of IOOS – the NOPP Executive Committee (EXCOM) must commit more time to both guiding Ocean.US work and carrying the message to their agencies

Effective communications to address these concerns is arguably the highest priority at present, and it presents significant challenges.

4.3.2 What are the challenges?

Not all the NOPP agencies see that the IOOS is of value to them; in fact, not all NOPP agencies have signed the MOA creating Ocean.US. Some agencies fear that IOOS will require reprogramming of significant resources from existing activities, and they will be unwilling to budget for IOOS activities without encouragement from the Administration.

Agencies are very conscious of the pitfalls of multi-agency activities and are very desirous of “lead status” in order to be able to get credit for their successes. If Ocean.US is to function as an interagency program office, the agencies must be convinced that the IOOS will increase their ability to achieve their missions and that they will benefit by funding the development and operation of Regional Associations. At present, there is very little trust or belief that this will happen.

At an operational level, IOOS requirements to agree to standards and protocols for measurements and data exchange are difficult for many agency managers.

4.3.3 What are we doing now?

The Director meets monthly with the Ocean.US Executive Committee and the NOPP Interagency Working Group, and biannually with the National Ocean Research Leadership Council. He has sporadic meetings with associate administrators of federal agencies and program managers.

The NSF Liaison meets weekly with staff of the National Science Foundation, quarterly with the Minerals Management Service and monthly with the Office of Naval Research.

4.4 Researchers and Operational Groups

4.4.1 Why are they a key audience?

Researchers engaged in operational oceanography, researchers engaged in research and operational groups engaged in operational oceanography all must understand and support IOOS. Technical groups within mission agencies such as NOAA, EPA, Navy, Department of the Interior, etc. that are running operational programs are part of this key audience. Current observing system elements that would benefit from an integrated approach to ocean observations and analysis or those whose participation would benefit IOOS must be convinced that they can achieve their goals more effectively through an integrated approach.

We must help researchers understand that operational oceanography will benefit their science and that the investment in operational oceanography will not be in competition with funding for research. We need researchers to work to develop standards, provide quality control processes and do value-added work with IOOS data. In some cases their activities should be transitioned to operational status, and they must be convinced this is in their best interest.

In the short term (< 10 yrs), it is true that researchers (from public and private sectors as well as academia) will implement and operate much of the IOOS. For the longer term, we need to be training the next generation of technicians who will operate and improve the system over time. If a too-large fraction of the research community actually engages in operational oceanography in the long term, the scientific enterprise will be compromised. Academia must realize that they must start building the technical pool that will be needed in the future.

Agency heads must be convinced that an integrated approach is to their advantage and they must communicate this to their operational groups.

4.4.2 What are the challenges?

The challenge in communicating effectively with these groups can be summarized in the “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it” sentiment. Current operators of observing system elements may not see advantages to participation in IOOS and want to keep doing things as they are; researchers are comfortable with their current funding mechanism (including earmarks) and their primary concern is their own projects. Researchers operating observing systems may be resistant to handing off programs to operational groups, fearing that the quality of the data or products will decline.

Furthermore, operators and potential operators are already overworked and may see participation in an integrated program as an additional burden.

4.4.3 What are we doing now?

Ocean.US staff, members of USGSC, representatives of developing regional observing systems and others committed to the IOOS have been communicating with this audience in a variety of ways. These include IOOS sessions and talks at national and international meetings and conferences, including American Geophysical Union, ASLO, TOS, ERF, ICES, PICES, Oceanology International, MTS, IEEE and Offshore Communications.

Staff and IOOS supporters have authored articles about IOOS which have appeared in *Oceanography*, *The Journal of Coastal Research*, *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment*, *Marine Policy*, *The Oceanography Magazine*, *Marine Technology Journal*, *Offshore Technology* and others. They have met with operational and research groups within NOPP agencies, participated in called meetings, and have been in email and phone contact with them.

4.5 Commercial Sector Providers

4.5.1 Why are they a key audience?

The support of current commercial-sector providers of environmental information, telecommunications services, data management and others who might participate in IOOS can be invaluable. Many of these enterprises have active and influential government affairs offices that can speak to members of Congress in support of IOOS, if they feel they can have a meaningful role in the program. Conversely, if they oppose the program, they can have strong negative influence on its future.

4.5.2 What are the challenges?

At present, it is not possible for commercial-sector partners in activities funded by NOPP agencies to take the role of Principal Investigator, and large and highly successful companies may not wish to take what they view as a secondary role. Also, companies

may fear that IOOS represents competition from the government, not a business opportunity, and they have many unanswered questions and issues about IOOS:

IOOS data—Can they get it? Do they need to reveal their data generally or can it be used for specific purposes?

IOOS products—They do not wish IOOS to result in the public or academic sectors making products they are making or can make for other private sector users.

IOOS governance—They wish to share in planning and decision-making.

IOOS Implementation —They wish open access to funding to develop and maintain the system. They wish to sell products and services to IOOS implementers.

We must demonstrate that the commercial sector can be an active participant in developing and sustaining IOOS. We must gain their trust by minimizing competition between government and the commercial sector and demonstrating to them that they can be partners in IOOS.

4.5.3 What are we doing now?

We have held one major meeting in March 2004 in the Gulf Coast region to expose the commercial sector to IOOS plans; to solicit commercial sector interests in IOOS; and to entrain them in planning, implementation, use and advocacy. Similar meetings on the East and West Coasts will follow.

The USGSC has assembled a list of trade associations and within each category (e.g., transportation or fisheries) those associations of higher priority for contact by Ocean.US staff and/or USGSC members have been identified.

A list of upcoming meetings of technical, scientific, engineering and management associations is being maintained on the U.S. GOOS web site so that meetings can be more easily selected at which IOOS presentations are to be arranged.

4.6 Educators and Training Groups

4.6.1 Why are they a key audience?

Educators at all levels are the media by which future generations can learn about, use and support IOOS. Our schools, colleges and universities, as well as other training organizations, should have access to data and information from IOOS in order to better inform our future citizens and decision-makers about the marine environment, its uses, problems and approaches to protection.

4.6.2 What are the challenges?

Education in the United States is not controlled nationally. States have different approaches to public education and many schools are privately owned and controlled. Even colleges and universities are accredited by different associations in different parts of the country. This audience is very broad and diverse and therefore awareness is difficult to promote and maintain.

4.6.3 What are we doing now?

The Education Liaison in the Ocean.US office has sought to reach ocean science education leaders and other educators through attendance/presentations at conferences (National Marine Education Association, Marine Technology Society) and especially

arranged educators' workshops (ORION and IOOS-COSEE), as well as personal interaction via email, phone and one-on-one meetings.

The IOOS Work Group of the National Sea Grant Association has offered to assist Regional Associations with the establishment of Regional Education Councils that would provide advice and assistance to the Regional Associations' governors. These Regional Education Councils will be represented in an IOOS National Education Council.

4.7 Potential Users of IOOS Products

4.7.1 Why are they a key audience?

IOOS already has resulted in a variety of products being used by several sectors. Future users of IOOS products will be in an even wider variety of groups, ranging from marine-related enterprises in the commercial sector, to government entities, to the private and non-governmental sector, to members of the public who utilize marine resources for recreation, to educators at all levels.

We must make the future users of IOOS products aware of the potential value of these products so that they will (1) become involved in product development and marketing; (2) specify requirements for data and product delivery; and (3) become advocates for the program.

Some key user audiences are listed here (categories are from *Strategic Design Plan of the Coastal Module of GOOS*):

Commercial Sector (Shipping industry, fishing industry, marine recreation industry)

- U1 Shipping
- U2 Marine energy and mineral extraction
- U3 Insurance and re-insurance
- U4 Coastal engineers
- U5 Fishing (commercial, recreational, artisanal)
- U6 Agriculture
- U7 Aquaculture
- U8 Hotel-restaurant industry
- U9 Consulting companies

Government Sector (Federal agencies, state agencies, coastal zone management entities)

- U10 Fisheries management
- U11 Search and rescue
- U12 Port authorities and services
- U13 Weather services
- U14 Environmental regulation (pollution) agencies
- U15 Freshwater management/damming
- U16 Public health authorities
- U17 National security (including navies)
- U18 Wastewater management
- U19 Integrated coastal management

Public Sector/Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) (Advocacy groups, citizens who use the resources of the oceans and coasts)

- U20 Emergency response agencies
- U21 Ecotourism, Tourism
- U22 Conservation and Amenity (including environmental NGOs)
- U23 Consumers of seafood
- U24 Recreational swimming
- U25 Recreational boating
- Research and Education Sector* (Researchers—climate, physics, biogeochemistry, ecosystem; Educators—K-16 teachers, graduate advisors)
- U26 News Media
- U27 Educators
- U28 Scientific community

Not all users are “final consumers” of IOOS data and products. There are at least three levels of users: primary users, intermediate users, and end users, as illustrated in this example pertaining to meteorological data and products.

Primary User	National Weather Service	
Intermediate Users	Weather.com	Weathernews Oceanroutes
End Users	public/private/gov.	shipping industry

Commercial entities that provide environmental information, telecommunications, spacecraft and others services may wish to provide data and/or value-added products themselves. (See *Commercial Sector Providers*, above.)

4.7.2 What are the challenges?

While input from potential users regarding products desired is needed as soon as possible, most new product development will be done at the regional level; however, Regional Associations are still under development. This presents a significant challenge in communicating with potential users, who are widely dispersed across the country and are in many different sectors of the economy and society.

The list shown above (4.7.1) reveals the scope of very different kinds of audiences who make up the potential users of IOOS data and products. Initially, it will not be possible for the Ocean.US staff to establish communications with all of them, so they will need to prioritize the groups and target communications activities to those selected.

4.7.3 What are we doing now?

Communicating with such a varied and geographically dispersed group presents many challenges, and much of the interaction between IOOS planners and potential users has been and will be done at the regional level. However, Ocean.US staff have sought input from them in a variety of ways:

The Director and other staff attend conferences and workshops of Coastal Zone Managers, Coastal States Organizations, Sea Grant directors and extension agents and trade organizations such as the Marine Technology Society. They also attend biannual meetings of the U.S. GOOS Steering Committee (which includes representatives of potential user groups)

The Deputy Director for Coastal Processes has personal contact with coastal engineers, weather services, emergency response agencies and the scientific community through attendance and presentations at professional society meetings.

On the regional level, developers of Regional Associations have been conducting user forums.

The Chairman of the USGSC has collected and written brief summaries of “success stories” which show examples of existing products and services. These have been duplicated on preprinted “shells” as inserts in the Ocean.US pocket folder “Our Changing Coasts and Oceans—Forecasting Our Future.” These stories can be used with a wide variety of audiences, on the Ocean.US web site and in news releases and other media.

The USGSC also has encouraged industry representatives and IOOS supporters to submit articles to trade journals in support of IOOS. A list of target journals is maintained on the U.S. GOOS web site <http://www-ocean.tamu.edu/GOOS/goos.html> .

4.8 Our Partners in Development of the Regional Associations

4.8.1 Why are they a key audience?

The IOOS must be developed at the grassroots level with the involvement of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), government agencies, academia, industry and the public.

4.8.2 What are the challenges?

Since the Regional Associations are being formed at the grassroots level, based on regional priorities, communicating directly with the various entities involved in each region can be difficult. The challenges in communicating with these groups include (1) informing potential participants of opportunities and benefits within the regional systems; (2) informing potential users (all levels) of new data and products; and (3) securing advocacy from regional entities

4.8.3 What are we doing now?

Ocean.US staff have conducted two National Summits, March 31-April 1, 2003 and March 29-30, 2004, in addition to workshops and planning meetings for developers of Regional Associations. They also conduct monthly conference calls and are in contact by phone and personal visits.

Ocean.US personnel interact with organizers at the biannual U.S. GOOS Steering Committee meetings and at conferences and workshops of Coastal Zone Managers, Coastal States Organizations, Marine Technology Society and Sea Grant directors and extension agents.

The Ocean.US Research Associate has created a new web site specifically for developers of Regional Associations.

5.0 Goals

Goals (long-range) are the desired outcomes or end results of our communications efforts. They describe “where we would like to be” at some point in the future. The organizational goals of Ocean.US in which strategic communications can play an important role fall roughly into four areas: gaining authorization and funding of IOOS, gaining broad participation in the planning and implementation of IOOS, forming successful Regional Associations and creating advocacy for IOOS. A final goal regards the communications effort itself.

5.1 Gaining Authorization and Funding of IOOS

Goal I. Support of IOOS by the Administration

Goal II. Broad Congressional recognition of U.S. ocean, estuarine and Great Lakes issues and support of IOOS

Sub-Goal 1. Congressional authorization of IOOS and a workable governance structure as recommended in the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy’s report

Sub-Goal 2. Sustained support for the IOOS, including its Regional Associations and National Federation of Regional Associations, through long-term funding as a budget line item rather than earmarks for individual observing system elements

Goal III. Sustained and enthusiastic support of IOOS by all NOPP agencies, including engaging in the four-year Ocean.US planning and budgeting cycle for IOOS and adhering to the implementation plan

Sub-Goal 1. Signing of IOOS MOA by all NOPP agencies

Sub-Goal 2. Enthusiastic participation by NOPP agencies in regular planning and budgeting meetings including Regional Associations as participants

Sub-Goal 3. Submission by NOPP agencies of appropriation requests in support of IOOS goals and objectives

Sub-Goal 4. Expenditure by NOPP agencies of IOOS appropriations in accordance with the Implementation Plan

5.2 Gaining Broad Participation in the Planning and Implementation of IOOS

Goal IV. Development and implementation of national standards and protocols for measurements, data management and communications and modeling consistent with the IOOS Data Management and Communications (DMAC) Plan

Goal V. Broad and sustained participation in planning and implementing the IOOS to include federal agencies, state and local governments, private sectors, the education community, NGOs and other end users

5.3 Forming Successful Regional Associations

Goal VI. Successful formation of broad-based, fully funded Regional Associations and a National Federation of Regional Associations

5.4 Creating Advocacy for IOOS

Goal VII. Advocacy for the IOOS by participants and users

5.5 Strengthening the communications effort

Goal VIII. A coordinated, consistent and professional communications effort that effectively delivers IOOS messages to its key audiences

6.0 Messages

Messages are concepts the organization wants its key audiences to know and feel about it and the issues with which it is concerned. Although these messages would not likely appear in publications and other products in precisely the language used here, their content, expressed in wording appropriate to each audience being addressed, should be woven into all communications about IOOS. Customize the message to speak to the key audience and *show* the readers, don't just tell them—use real examples of accomplishments to convey the message.

Similarly, not all messages can or should be expressed in every communication. Some messages are stressed with one audience and others are stressed with other audiences. Select only a very few key messages which are relevant to the audience being addressed. Be selective—people do things for *their* reasons, not *ours*, so give them messages about issues important to *them*.

“Big Picture” Messages for All Audiences

6.1 Message One—*IOOS will improve Americans' quality of life by enabling accomplishment of seven important goals:*

- *Predicting weather and climate*
- *Facilitating safe and efficient marine operations*
- *Ensuring national security*
- *Managing resources for sustainable use*
- *Preserving health and restoring ecosystems*
- *Mitigating natural hazards*
- *Ensuring public health*

6.2 Message Two—*Our slogan: “IOOS: The Ocean Information Network.” This means that IOOS will provide ongoing and reliable one-stop shopping for the oceans. This will be possible because IOOS is a coordinated, multi-agency system being developed to provide systematic, reliable and easy-to-use information and services critical to U.S. interests.*

6.3 Message Three—*The integrated approach of IOOS is a cost-effective use of resources and creates the capacity to deal with complex problems.*

Sub-Messages for Specific Audiences

Congress and Executive Branch

6.4 Message Four—*IOOS and the proposed NSF Ocean Observatories Initiative (or other research initiatives) are distinct: OOI, if funded, will contribute to some IOOS objectives, but it is conceptually different—OOI is a **research program**, while IOOS provides observations for **products and services** for a broad community. The two*

programs are part of a continuum; successful development of OOI will benefit IOOS and vice versa.

6.5 Message Five—*IOOS is in the national interest.*

6.6 Message Six—*Although initial implementation of IOOS has and will continue to require reprogramming of resources from existing agency programs for several years, development of the fully integrated system will require substantial increases over current funding levels.*

NOPP Agencies

6.7 Message Seven—*Implementation of IOOS will help you accomplish your mission more effectively.*

6.8 Message Eight—*NOPP agencies will increase their credibility with the Congress and upper Administration if all NOPP agencies cooperate in developing the IOOS and adhere to the IOOS Development Plan, including the DMAC plan.*

6.9 Message Nine—*NOPP must develop mechanisms to reward agencies for successful partnering with other agencies.*

Researchers and Operational Groups

6.10 Message Ten—*IOOS is a new way of doing business and it presents an opportunity for researchers, not a threat. For example:*

- *A successful IOOS will lead to significant advances in scientific understanding of the oceans through the sustained and routine provision of data and more effective use of research funds.*
- *Researchers are needed to develop new approaches to observations and products and to demonstrate these with pilot projects.*
- *Researchers can achieve their goals more effectively through improved data management.*

6.11 Message Eleven—*Researchers need not be burdened with IOOS operational elements over the long term; their contributions will be in new science, the development of standards, technology and products as well as demonstration of these via pilot projects.*

6.12 Message Twelve—*Long-term federal support for observing system elements will come only to those that are integrated with Regional Associations or the national backbone, not through earmarks.*

Commercial Sector Providers

6.13 Message Thirteen—*The IOOS policies for production and exchange of data, products and services will be developed in concert with the commercial sector and will not preclude business opportunities for that sector.*

6.14 Message Fourteen—*The commercial sector can participate in IOOS in five ways: (1) developing and selling the goods and services required to implement and operate system elements; (2) running operational elements; (3) providing their own data to the system; (4) using data from the system, adding value and selling it; and (5) buying value-added products.*

Educators and Training Groups

6.15 Message Fifteen—*The observations and information from IOOS are of great potential value in education and should be integrated into the educational process.*

6.16 Message Sixteen—*Students should receive training/education regarding the marine environment including its threats, preservation and wise uses.*

6.17 Message Seventeen—*Training the next generation of technicians who will operate and improve the observing system over the long term should be a high priority for graduate programs in the marine sciences.*

Potential Users of IOOS Products

6.18 Message Eighteen—*Inputs from potential IOOS users are encouraged and needed so that products of value to their enterprises can be developed.*

Partners in Development of RAs

6.19 Message Nineteen—*A broad spectrum of interests—including federal, state and local government; NGOs; academia; and the private sector—must be involved in the development of Regional Associations and their business and governance plans, as described in the document, “IOOS Development Plan, Part I.”*

6.20 Message Twenty—*You will benefit from your regional system, so you should advocate for it.*

6.21 Message Twenty-One—*You should encourage your regional system to provide products/data you need.*

Multiple Audiences

These messages should be communicated to a variety of audiences, especially Researchers and Operational Groups, Commercial Sector Providers, Potential Users and Partners.

6.22 Message Twenty-Two—*Your expression of support for the authorization and funding of IOOS is important to its success.*

6.23 Message Twenty-Three—*The IOOS provides information for everyone—use it.*

6.24 Message Twenty-Four—*Your suggestions for IOOS products/information are sought.*

7.0 Recommended Priority Communications Actions

The Ocean.US staff must prepare a plan of action for carrying out the objectives and activities recommended in this communications plan. It must be informed by and integrated with a new version of the general/overall Ocean.US Action Plan proposed by the U.S. GOOS Steering Committee.

Ocean.US's organizational goals and the communications objectives to help reach them are found in Section 8. Due to staffing limitations, it will not be possible to carry out all these suggested activities simultaneously, so priorities must be assigned. Immediate and Medium-Range communications priorities are discussed below. Detail on each recommendation may be found in Section 8, as indicated in italics in parentheses.

An accompanying document, "*Ocean.US Communications Work Sheet*" presents the recommended objectives and activities in tabular form, indicating priority, person responsible, deadline and status.

7.1 Immediately

7.1.1 Get the IOOS message to decision-makers

The immediate priorities for Ocean.US are the accomplishment of Goals I, II and III—support from the Administration, support from the Congress and support by all NOPP agencies. The success of IOOS depends on the accomplishment of all three, and they are interrelated.

Thanks to the positive recommendations regarding an integrated ocean observing system expressed in the *Final Report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy* (Governors' Draft), it might be assumed that the Administration supports the establishment of IOOS. However, this cannot be taken for granted. The Executive Branch must hear about IOOS directly from those who are developing it. (*See 8.1.1 for detail.*)

Congress may not act to authorize the IOOS unless it sees that the Administration supports it and that the agencies under their oversight support it. The NOPP agencies may not support IOOS unless they see that the Administration and Congress support it. A key to breaking this political logjam is to introduce the voices of those to whom the Congress listens—their constituents. (*See 8.2 for detail.*)

To gain the support of the NOPP agencies, it will be necessary to contact the agency heads directly. Although Ocean.US staff meets regularly with the Ocean.US ExCom and the IWG, members of the former do not represent all parts of their agencies. The IWG has its own agenda, which is not a one-to-one fit with Ocean.US activities and its members are not at the decision-making level in their agencies. (*See 8.3 for detail.*)

7.1.2 Add communications expertise to Ocean.US

Existing staff of Ocean.US can carry out some of the communications activities recommended in this plan and detailed in "Goals and Supporting Objectives," Section 8. Others will require the assistance of contractors and consultants, and some can be carried

out by outside “advocates,” interested volunteers who, because they are not federal employees, can carry the IOOS message to elected officials and other decision-makers.

However, the members of the Ocean.US staff, while highly qualified in their respective fields, are not trained, professional communicators. The office would benefit from the addition of at least one full-time person with training and experience in communications.

This communications specialist would write the op-ed articles, one-pagers, briefing documents, web site content, electronic newsletter and other pieces intended for public information use, as well as be the contact point for contractors providing more specialized services, such as maintaining the web site, designing and producing printed materials, developing a graphic identity (including a logo), etc. (*See 8.8.3 and 8.8.4 for detail*)

7.1.3. Enhance electronic communications capabilities

Ocean.US must communicate with a wide variety of audiences who are located in all parts of the country. Each audience has a different role vis-à-vis IOOS, and, although some messages we desire to deliver are common to all audiences, many groups need to receive messages very specific to their needs and concerns. Thanks to the modern technology of the Internet, it is possible to reach a large and varied audience without the expense of older, traditional methods involving the production and mailing of printed materials (although printed materials still play a role in the overall communications “mix”).

Ocean.US has realized the power of the Internet and has a web site and electronically distributed newsletter. However, the web site and newsletter are being used primarily to communicate with those who have been working to develop the IOOS and the Regional Associations—the “family,” so to speak—and its content and organization reflect this.

However, no matter whom you *intend* your web site to communicate with, the fact is that *anyone* can and will find it and read it. In today’s world, when someone wants to know more about an organization, the first impulse is to “Google it”—conduct a search of the Internet to see if the organization has a web site. Everyone uses the Internet—Congressional staff, industry, potential users of IOOS products, state governor’s staffs, virtually all your key audiences

The good news is that you have a communications medium that can be seen by all your key audiences. The bad news is that it currently is not “user friendly” for the variety of audiences you need to reach—in fact, it is seen to be “user unfriendly” even by many in the IOOS family. It is a powerful tool that is not being used to its fullest potential. (*See 8.8.1 and 8.8.2 for detail*) **[NOTE: Funding has been made available and a contractor selected to redesign the web site. Time frame for this work is July 1, 2004 through May 31, 2005. Also, the contractor is redesigning the electronic newsletter under an existing contract. Work will be completed no later than September 2004.]**

7.2 Medium-Term

7.2.1 Provide communications support and other assistance to developing Regional Associations

The Regional Associations are being developed from the ground up, and those leading this effort do not always have professional communications staffs to assist them. It is important that the RA developers have professional-looking materials, which carry the appropriate messages to use in their interactions with local, state and regional entities. *(See 8.6.1 for detail)*

The Ocean.US office should increase its communications with entities in the coastal states, such as governors, state agencies, boards, etc., that are (or should be) involved in the development of Regional Associations. *(See 8.6.2 for detail)*

Ocean.US should encourage and facilitate the formation of Regional and National Advisory (Outreach) Councils, with the assistance of the National Sea Grant Association's IOOS Work Group. *(See 8.5.1 for detail)*

7.2.2 Increase level of two-way communications with potential users

Much of the communication with these groups is carried out by RA developers, but Ocean.US needs to establish a dialogue with them for several reasons: (1) communications from “the headquarters office” builds credibility with this audience for those working to develop the RAs; (2) direct communication with this audience provides the opportunity to reinforce key messages; (3) Ocean.US needs to hear from this audience directly about its needs and concerns; and (4) creating a strong relationship with users can prove valuable should Ocean.US need to call on them for support and assistance in communicating with decision-makers. *(See 8.5.1, 8.5.2, 8.5.3, 8.5.4, 8.5.5 and 8.6 for detail)*

7.2.3 Encourage advocacy for IOOS among potential users and participants

Ocean.US needs to take an active role in developing relationships with potential users of IOOS products and services and asking them to express their support to decision-makers. Major companies, trade associations and entities participating in the development of regional associations can be effective spokespersons for IOOS. *(See 8.7 for detail)*

8.0 Goals and Supporting Objectives

While goals describe “where we would like to be,” **objectives** say “how we will get there.” Objectives are the actions that will be taken to accomplish the goals.

Suggested objectives and activities are listed here under the goal they most directly support.

8.1

Goal I. Support of IOOS by the Administration

8.1.1 Objective A. Brief President’s Science Advisor and leadership of Office of Management and Budget on the IOOS.

Activities:

1. Approach OMB and OSTP representatives in IWG to arrange the meetings.
2. Prepare a standard presentation aimed specifically at this audience (Messages One, Two and Three).
3. Get IOOS support in major political party platforms.

8.2

Goal II. Broad Congressional recognition of U.S ocean, estuarine and Great Lakes issues and support of IOOS

Sub-Goal 1. Congressional authorization of IOOS and a workable governance structure as recommended in the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's report

Sub-Goal 2. Sustained support for the IOOS, including its Regional Associations and National Federation of Regional Associations, through long-term funding as a budget line item rather than earmarks for individual observing systems

8.2.1 Objective A. Make and maintain personal contacts with Members/staff of the appropriate House and Senate Committees and the Ocean Caucus.

Activities:

1. Determine the appropriate person to visit each Member or staff.
 - a. Members of the Regional and National Advisory Councils (see 8.5.1)
 - b. Advocates, such as industry who will benefit
 - c. Individuals from the member's district/state who are involved in developing the Regional Association
 - d. Ocean.US staff (if invited)
2. Visits may be arranged by legislative liaisons with institutions or government offices in regions that are developing Regional Associations, the legislative affairs officers of advocates' businesses or others as appropriate.
3. Prepare printed briefing materials for members and/or staff to be used in personal visits. "One-pagers" on these topics can be placed in the IOOS pocket folder:
 - a. Description of IOOS
 - b. Benefits to constituents in individual member's districts (including industry benefits)
 - c. Lists of supporting organizations/individuals
 - d. Short- and long-term benefits to the nation and the environment
 - e. A uniform presentation of IOOS issues and the help being requested.
4. All visits and other contacts should be coordinated to avoid duplication of effort.

8.2.2 Objective B. Create a section of the Ocean.US website that reinforces information provided to legislators/elected officials, perhaps by region—"Inside the Beltway." Web links are a primary source of information for legislative staff, and must be kept current.

Activities:

1. Include information provided in personal visits (above), by regions if possible.
2. Include “success story” one-pagers in PDF format.

8.2.3 Objective C. Write op-ed pieces for local papers in the Members’ districts. If they mention the local Member’s role in the activity or on the relevant committee, they will be clipped and sent to the Member and his/her staff.

Activities:

1. Identify newspapers in members’ districts.
2. Prepare customized news releases in which the appropriate Regional Association organizers are quoted, or show that individual as the author.
3. Distribute from the Ocean.US office, or have the RA organizers submit to their local newspapers.

8.3

Goal III. Sustained and enthusiastic support of IOOS by all NOPP agencies, including engaging in the four-year Ocean.US planning and budgeting cycle for IOOS and adhering to the implementation plan

8.3.1 Objective A. Develop and implement a communications strategy that focuses on heads of the NOPP agencies, legislative affairs officers, managers of different sectors of each agency and managers of operational units across the nation.

Activities:

1. Schedule meetings with the heads of all NOPP agencies, managers of different sectors of each agency (e.g., the five components in NOAA) and managers of operational units across the nation (e.g., Naval Meteorology and Oceanography Command, Naval Research Laboratory, MMS Gulf of Mexico Outer Continental Shelf Office in New Orleans).
2. Ocean.US senior staff makes visits to NOPP agency operational units across the nation, accompanied by appropriate person(s) in each region involved in development of Regional Associations.
3. Ocean.US senior staff, alone or with members of the U.S. GOOS Steering Committee and/or other advocates, makes visits to agency heads, etc.
4. Prepare printed briefing materials to be used in personal visits describing IOOS's benefit to each agency and how the agency can benefit IOOS (win-win situation). Place materials in IOOS pocket folder to leave with persons visited.
5. Invite legislative affairs officers of NOPP agencies (as a group) to the Ocean.US office for regular briefings on the status and plans of IOOS.

8.3.2 Objective B. Develop and implement a communications strategy that focuses on those individuals in the NOPP agencies who will participate in the Ocean.US planning process as described in Part One of the IOOS Development Plan, Section 3.3 The Planning Process.

Activities:

1. Prepare a five-year calendar showing the steps in the Ocean.US planning process.
2. Identify critical points in the process in which communications from Ocean.US must take place.

3. Determine appropriate methods of communication at each point in the process (email messages, meetings, conference calls, etc.) and carry these out.
4. Create a site on the Ocean.US web page that includes the master calendar and other information pertinent to the planning process, to be a resource for all involved in the process.

8.4

Goal IV. Development and implementation of national standards and protocols for measurements, data management and communications and modeling consistent with the IOOS Data Management and Communications (DMAC) Plan

8.4.1 Objective A. Engage data providers (operators of observing systems or elements thereof) in the development of standards and protocols.

Activity:

1. Develop standards and protocols through national workshops for potential contributors to the IOOS that target key elements of the IOOS (observing techniques, data telemetry, DMAC, modeling).

8.4.2 Objective B. Enable compliance with national standards and protocols by all contributors to the IOOS.

Activity:

1. Conduct annual training sessions for regional and federal operators to build capacity and familiarize them with best practice procedures.

8.5

Goal V. Broad and sustained participation in planning and implementing the IOOS to include federal agencies, state and local governments, private sectors, the education community, NGOs and other end users

8.5.1 Objective A. Form Regional and National Advisory (Outreach) Councils with the assistance of the National Sea Grant Association’s IOOS Work Group.

8.5.2 Objective B. Create a section on the Ocean.US web site aimed at potential users—“IOOS Products and Services.”

Activities:

1. Include a brief statement about the types of products and services that are expected to come from IOOS.
2. Include links to IOOS “success stories” in PDF format.
3. Include links to summaries and any other documents that result from industry forums, user workshops, etc.
4. Include a questionnaire designed to collect input about data and products users may want.

8.5.3 Objective C. Attract potential users to Ocean.US web site to build awareness of IOOS and receive input regarding desired products.

Activities:

1. Identify trade journals, magazines, other periodicals targeted to each key audience/user group. Utilize Sea Grant publications as well.
2. Develop articles about IOOS for the trade journals—solicit user inputs and direct users to Ocean.US web site.
3. Pitch article to above-identified periodicals. If pitch fails, buy ads in critical media.

8.5.4 Objective D. Identify a person on the Ocean.US staff as the principal contact for industry.

Activities:

1. Include this person’s email in the users’ section of the web site.

2. Enable this person to attend all user forums, etc., conducted by RA developers and be on the program.

3. Include the education liaison's email in the users' section of the web site.

8.5.5 Objective E. Establish sustained forums that facilitate exchange of information among data users and providers.

Activities:

1. Continue annual IOOS Implementation Conference.

2. Encourage RAs to conduct regular forums in their areas.

3. Add all attendees at user forums, industry workshops, educator meetings, etc., to the Ocean.US newsletter distribution database.

8.6

Goal VI. Successful formation of broad-based, fully funded Regional Associations and a National Federation of Regional Associations

8.6.1 Objective A. Support those working to develop Regional Associations.

Activities:

1. Make them aware of the communications products regarding IOOS available to them in quantities from the Ocean.US office (pocket folder, “shells” to print inserts on, 4 X 9 brochure), and encourage them to distribute them at meetings, personal visits, forums, etc.
2. Survey them regarding other communications products that might be useful to them (such as inserts on certain topics).
3. Provide those products or show them how to obtain them.
4. Create a link on the Ocean.US web page to all the Regional Associations’ web pages and vice versa. Also, create an unrestricted link on the Ocean.US web site to the web site of the National Federation of Regional Associations Many products and resources may be made available on these sites.
5. Encourage them to utilize the Sea Grant extension network and Sea Grant periodicals to communicate with their key audiences and to work with the Sea Grant IOOS Work Group (chaired by Dr. Jeffrey Reutter, Ohio Sea Grant), which has been formed to assist in the development and implementation of IOOS and the Regional Associations.
6. Request each RA to create a link on its web site to all data, products and information in their regional coastal ocean observing system.

8.6.2 Objective B. Increase communications from the Ocean.US office to the entities in the coastal states who are involved in the development of Regional Associations, such as governors, state agencies, boards, NGOs, etc.

Activities:

1. Add the appropriate individuals to the Ocean.US newsletter (*Ocean Views*) distribution database.
2. Develop case studies of uses of IOOS data and information for use in communicating with coastal resource management community.

8.7

Goal VII. Advocacy for the IOOS by participants and users

8.7.1 Objective A. Seek the support of national associations that represent major potential users

Activities:

1. Identify key associations and prioritize list.
2. Make personal visits to leaders/representatives of these industry associations following this recommended “visitation process”:
 - a. Explain IOOS and its potential
 - b. Ask what the organization needs that IOOS might provide
 - c. State what Ocean.US wishes from the association
 - d. Inquire regarding regional representatives of the association
3. Ask them to express their support to Congressmen and other decision-makers with whom they have contact.
4. Ask them to express support of IOOS in their regular communications with their members, such as newsletters, and to encourage their members to express support to decision-makers.
5. Follow up the visit and inquire whether the association has been able to help Ocean.US. If so, membership in the IOOS National Stakeholder Advisory Council might be offered.

8.7.2 Objective B. Seek the support of major companies who feel positively toward IOOS.

Activities:

1. Identify major companies who have a positive opinion of IOOS.
2. Ask them to meet with key Congressional members/staff, or email or write them, in support of the IOOS legislation.
3. Encourage them to submit articles to trade journals in support of IOOS.

8.7.3 Objective C. Make presentations at industry trade meetings and scientific meetings.

Activities:

1. Maintain current list of pertinent meetings on web site
2. Describe potential benefits of IOOS.
3. Ask attendees to express their support of IOOS to decision-makers.

8.8

Goal VIII. A coordinated, consistent and professional communications effort that effectively delivers IOOS messages to its key audiences

8.8.1 Objective A. Redesign and streamline the Ocean.US and IOOS web sites to be user-oriented and to convey not only important documents and news about IOOS's development, but also information that will reinforce the key messages expressed in this plan.

1. Ocean.US web site should include:
 - (a) Background behind IOOS (e.g. links to intergovernmental GOOS, GCOS, JCOMM)
 - (b) U.S. organizational structure underpinning IOOS (e.g. links to documentation, NOPP, participating agencies, Regional Associations)
 - (c) Ongoing activities to develop and improve the IOOS (e.g. links to future meetings and activities)
2. IOOS web should include:
 - (a) Purposes and status of the system (links to and descriptions of data and information—products and services)
 - (b) What IOOS really is; what it has done
 - (c) Links to national backbone
 - (d) Links to the regional coastal observing system web sites
 - (e) Links to ocean facts and issues
3. Graphic appearance should be compatible with the new printed pieces
4. Utilize an experienced web designer as a contractor

8.8.2 Objective B. Redesign the Ocean.US electronic newsletter, *Ocean Views*, and expand its distribution list to include the appropriate members of all key audiences.

1. Contractor redesigning the web site should do this, as the two media are interrelated
2. Appropriate staff of the Ocean.US should expand the distribution list

8.8.3 Objective C. Hire a full-time, trained, experienced communications professional for the Ocean.US staff.

1. Communicator, in consultation with other staff, creates plan of work to accomplish other communications activities called for in this plan.
2. Communicator ensures that Communications Plan is updated periodically to meet changing needs of Ocean.US and IOOS.
3. Communicator works with contractor to design a graphic identity, including a logo, for IOOS, to be used when IOOS comes into being.

8.8.4 Objective D. Prepare articles for release to mass and trade media

1. General op-ed piece to take advantage of opportunistic situations
2. Piece for Chairman of USGSC to place in major ocean trade journals
3. Announcement of passage of the IOOS authorization bill
4. Write a brief boilerplate statement about IOOS for use in all media releases

9.0 Evaluation

9.1 Evaluating the effectiveness of communications efforts is challenging, because it often involves trying to measure changes in attitudes. In *The Communication Plan: The Heart of Strategic Communications*, the author says, “As an organizational communicator, I believe the most essential question you must answer is this: ‘What is the outcome you expect from your communication activity?’” (Potter, 2001). What is it that we want to see change? Is it an attitude? Is it increased knowledge about an issue? Is it a change in behavior?

9.2 Throughout this plan, we have discussed existing attitudes and behaviors among our key audiences. We described outcomes that we want to see come about and articulated them as goals. We have designed communications strategies to contribute to the accomplishment of those goals. In order to measure our success, we must take a scientific management approach.

9.3 The first step in communications planning is to conduct research to define the current situation. This was done through interviews and meetings with members of the Ocean.US staff and others as described in 4.0, in which we defined the current situation regarding our key audiences. We identified the audiences and characterized their attitudes and behaviors toward the IOOS. This plan was written based on that information and other preliminary research on the background of IOOS.

9.4 The second evaluation step will be to conduct research to monitor our efforts and make necessary adjustments, and the third will be research to measure the effectiveness of our efforts in helping accomplish our goals. Potter says that the key to expected outcomes is behavior, and he describes the accepted techniques and methods for measuring the expected behavioral outcomes of a communications plan.

9.5 *Publication studies.* The readership survey is mainstay of communications evaluation, and it can help determine if the publication is contributing to achieving your goals. Ocean.US does not publish any printed periodicals, but it does have an electronic newsletter and a web site. A “reader” survey could be created and placed on the web site to determine if readers are satisfied with its content, ease of use, etc.

9.6 *Media searches/data retrieval.* Thanks to the Internet and search engines such as Google, it is easier than ever to find out what is being written and published about your organization. Most newspapers and news magazines now have online versions that can be searched to see if your news release or op-ed piece was used. Commercial sources of media and data retrieval such as Lexis-Nexis, Data-Times, Dow Jones News/Retrieval, Bloomberg Business News and First Call are very expensive. However, much can be accomplished by an “amateur” web-surfer.

9.7 *Focus groups.* This is the most commonly used research method in the communication field. Focus groups can provide data useful in evaluating programs and in providing a basis for decision-making. Typically, a focus group is made up of 10 to 12 carefully targeted participants who are questioned about their thoughts and feelings about an issue, product or service, as well as marketing and communications components. A trained facilitator conducts the focus group.

9.8 *Interviews*. This is a simple and inexpensive, but effective, technique. Simply schedule a meeting with a member of your key audience and ask them what they think or feel about the relationship of your two organizations. Potter says, “Long one-to-one interviews seem especially appropriate for measuring desired outcomes like enhanced relationships with strategic publics.” Forums can be considered as “group interviews,” in which you can hear from key audiences. If you hear repeated questions on an issue that was covered in various communications vehicles, then you know there is a problem somewhere in the communications process.

9.9 *Surveys*. Surveys are used when it is necessary to understand the motivations and attitudes that are driving the behavior of a key audience, to try to anticipate their reaction to an announcement, or to establish a baseline in order to measure the effects of an upcoming communications program. Surveys can be lengthy, or simply a few key questions. They often are designed following focus group sessions and interviews. They should be pre-tested to check the appropriateness of the responses scales and the wording.

9.10 *Communications audit*. This is the most comprehensive measurement of a communications program, and may be used to measure efforts throughout a large or small organization or a single division, unit or location. It is a comprehensive study of the communication philosophy, concepts, structure, flow and practice within an organization, and uses interviews, focus groups and surveys as tools. It can reveal misunderstandings, help measure media effectiveness and evaluate ongoing programs.

9.11 Evaluation is an important part of the communications process, but it is a large and complex field. I have not recommended any particular evaluation technique for Ocean.US to pursue, but hope that the brief descriptions given here will prompt the staff to look for opportunities to easily and inexpensively measure their communications efforts.

References

The Communication Plan: The Heart of Strategic Communications, 2nd Edition, 2001, Lester R. Potter, ABC

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U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System, Part I: Structure and Governance, May 2003, Ocean.US

Appendix A

Summary of Meeting with Ocean.US Staff

Summary

Initial Meeting Re. Ocean.US/IOOS Communications Plan

September 13, 2003

Arlington, Virginia

Present: Larry Atkinson, Pat Dennis, Eric Lindstrom, Tom Malone, Blanche Meeson, Laura Nowlin, Kristine Stump

Nowlin made a brief presentation about the reasons for having a communications plan and the steps involved in developing one.

The group then discussed communications issues facing Ocean.US and IOOS. Several topics were discussed, including:

What are we “selling,” Ocean.US or IOOS, or both?

Who are our critical/key audiences and why?

What are some of the goals of a communications effort? (I.e., desired outcomes)

Later in the day, Nowlin, Malone and Murial Cole met with Margaret Davidson. These issues were discussed:

What communications products/processes are needed currently?

A brief summary of the points made in both meetings is given here:

What are we “selling,” Ocean.US or IOOS, or both?

The focus should be on IOOS, but Ocean.US needs recognition within the Federal agencies. We need support for the idea of IOOS and recognition of the fact that without Ocean.US, IOOS will not come about.

Who are our critical/key audiences and why?

**U.S Congress*—We want passage of appropriate legislation in the Congress that will help in the development and implementation of IOOS. In the House, we need awareness of IOOS and a commitment to support it.

**NOPP agencies*—We need them to continue to provide funds and personnel to Ocean.US. We need the support of all of the NOPP agencies; some do not see that IOOS is of value to them.

**Academics who conduct observing systems*—They must be convinced to transition to operational status. We must demonstrate the value of IOOS to the research community.

**Potential users of IOOS products*—They must be made aware of the potential value of the products to be developed by IOOS so that (1) they can be advocates for the program, and (2) they can provide input into the product development process.

Users fall into these groups:

**Public Sector*—Federal agencies, state agencies, coastal zone management entities.

**Private Sector*—Shipping industry, fishing industry, marine recreation industry, citizens who use the resources of the oceans and coasts.

**Educators*—[what level]

**Academia*—[need specifics]

**Sea Grant Programs*—They will be our partners in development of the Regional Associations.

What are some of the goals of a communications effort?

**Sustained political support for IOOS at the federal, state and local levels.*

**Coordinated and phased development of an IOOS.*

**Interagency cooperation in the funding effort.*

What communications products/processes are needed currently?

**"General-purpose" brochure for use in visits with elected officials and agency heads*—The U.S. GOOS Steering Committee has developed the text of a brochure, which has been edited by Kristine Stump. Nowlin will have a designer prepare a layout for presentation to the Committee.

**Standard cover design for reports*—Nowlin will have designer work on this along with general brochure.

**One-pager of Strategic Plan Summary*—To use in visits and communications with State and Federal agencies, oil companies and other industry groups (suggested by W. Nowlin at a later date) Text exists, but needs design.

**Standard format for IOOS participants to report to Ocean.US*—Eric Lindstrom articulated the need for participants to respond in a concise fashion to requests for information Ocean.US needs to support the development of IOOS.

Appendix B

Notes from Meeting Regarding Message Statements

Notes from 8 January 2004 Meeting in SFO

1.0 Key messages (L. Nowlin will craft into Message Statements)

1.1 What's in a name?

IOOS: The Ocean Information Network

1.2 What is IOOS?

IOOS is a New Way of Doing Business

- Improves access to data and products

- Suggests new products to solve problems

- Provides infrastructure/capabilities

IOOS is Ongoing and Reliable

- Convenient—One-stop shopping for the oceans

- A continuing network

IOOS Provides New and Improved Information (through monitoring and prediction)

- Better care of the coast and ocean

- Better uses of the coasts and ocean

- Healthy use of the ocean

- Safe uses of the coasts and ocean

- Global views on climate

- National views on America's coasts and oceans

- Better information for better decisions

IOOS Provides Information to Decision Makers

- Coasts and oceans are the last frontier—protect them

1.3 An Archtypical Identity

An identity is needed and must be carefully selected.

An IOOS logo is needed. This should reflect the identity.

2.0 IOOS Successes and Future Products

2.1 Examples of successes

A single sheet should be prepared with succinct description of each IOOS success:

- Gulf of Mexico oil spill response—Buzz Martin

Human health—S. Weisberg
NDBC integration of weather observations—Landry Bernard
Argo and change of the hydrologic cycle—Dean Roemmich
GOOS Products and Services Bulletin—Johannes Guddal
GoMOOS search and rescue—Charlie Colgan/Evan Richert

2.2 Examples of future products

A single sheet should be prepared describing each of a series of potential future products:

- A national portal to beach web cams
- A national portal to river discharge records
- A national portal to HF radar surface currents
- Integration via HAZMAT portal of results of surface current models from U.S. estuaries and shelves for use in spill situations

3.0 IOOS Media Pieces

3.1 Origin of IOOS releases

Pieces should formally originate from the Ocean.US.

3.2 Subsequent releases

Secondary release of IOOS media pieces by each of the following groups should be sought:

- Participating federal agencies
- NGO's
- Sea Grant
- Associations such as API or NOIA

3.3 The first pieces needed

- A general op-ed piece to take advantage of opportunistic situations—Kris will develop with freelancer
 - Such a release should occur as soon as possible and will serve as a test of the process.
- A piece for W. Nowlin to place in major ocean trade journals—Kris will develop
- An announcement of passage of the IOOS authorization bill
- Pieces to be issued in conjunction with the release of the Commission on Ocean Policy's Report

3.4 Brief statement of what IOOS is

Need a brief (one- to two-sentence) statement that will be used in all media releases

3.5 A one-page fact sheet on the issues IOOS is going to address (get from 4X9 brochure)

This one-page fact sheet would be used in connection with the piece in conjunction with the Commission Report, and other pieces as appropriate.

To be printed on standard Ocean.US one-page insert letterhead

3.6 A one-page fact sheet on IOOS successes and future products (See Section 2.0)

For use with media pieces

To be printed on standard Ocean.US one-page insert letterhead

4.0 IOOS and Ocean.US Web Sites

4.1 IOOS and the Ocean.US enterprise should have distinct, though closely linked, web sites.

4.2 The Ocean.US web site

This should give the background behind the IOOS (e.g., links to intergovernmental GOOS, to GCOS, to JCOMM); the U.S. organizational structure underpinning IOOS (e.g., links to documentation, to NOPP, to the participating agencies, to the Regional Associations); and the ongoing activities to develop and improve the IOOS (e.g., links to future meetings and activities).—Contractor (L. Nowlin) and subcontractor will revise current Ocean. US site.

4.3 The IOOS web site

This should give the purposes and status of the system—links to and descriptions of data and information (products and services). What IOOS really is. What has it done? Status and links to the national backbone. Links to the regional coastal observing system web sites.—NOAA Coastal Services Center will develop and maintain this site (new).

5.0 IOOS Support at the Executive Level

Needed is the addition of IOOS support into a plank within each national party's election platform.