

DATE: 15 September 2008

AN OPEN STATEMENT TO: the U.S. Ocean Observing Community

FROM: The Interagency Working Group on Ocean Observations (IWGOO)

SUBJECT: Ocean.US office to close; IWGOO role to expand

Over much of the past decade, collaborative efforts among government agencies, the private sector, the academic and environmental communities, and other stakeholders have been focused on planning a US national Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®). This has included activities related to ocean observing systems, data management and coordination and modeling and analysis. Many of these efforts have benefitted from the energy, leadership and facilitation provided by Ocean.US, the National Office for Integrated and Sustained Ocean Observations.

Ocean.US was originally established in 2000 to coordinate the planning activities of ten (10) federal agencies as they worked together to design a roadmap for establishing IOOS as a national program, and as the United States' contribution to the Global Ocean Observing System. The Ocean.US record of accomplishments stands as one of the most successful U.S. interagency collaborations of the past decade.

Ocean.US' significant accomplishments include:

- Defining the path forward for overall implementation of a national IOOS.
- Successfully developing the IOOS concept as a major recommendation in the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy's Report;
- Promoting the establishment of 11 Regional observing Associations that coordinate the state, academic and local ocean observations, and research activities;
- Producing 17 key IOOS planning documents, and contributed to many others;
- Initiating the establishment of common data standards; and
- Sponsoring a series of significant IOOS-related, community-building workshops.

Today the ocean observing community can see the results of these efforts with the establishment of a solid foundation upon which to implement IOOS. Building on this foundation will require continued collaboration among all ocean observing partners as we transition to full implementation and sustained operation of the IOOS. With completion of the planning phase of IOOS, the seventeen (17) sponsoring federal agencies that belong to the Interagency Working Group on Ocean Observations (IWGOO) have determined that the activities of Ocean.US will have been completed, and that the office will now cease operations at the end of September, 2008.

As the ocean observing community moves forward into the next phase of IOOS, federal agencies remain committed to cooperating among themselves and with partners throughout the ocean community. Coordination among the federal agency partners will remain the responsibility of the (IWGOO) along with NOAA as the designated lead federal agency for IOOS. The IWGOO is a formal chartered body, and will see IOOS through this transition period.

The IWGOO will also serve as the lead coordinating group to oversee coordination of IOOS with other major ocean initiatives nationally and internationally, such as the National Science Foundation's Ocean Observatories Initiative (OOI), the Census of Marine Life's Ocean Biogeographic Information System (OBIS), the National Water Quality Monitoring Network, and NOAA's Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping Program, along with critical research conducted by NASA, the Navy, NOAA, EPA, USACE, NSF and other agencies. The IWGOO will continue to coordinate with the Regional Associations, through the National Federation of Regional Associations (NFRA). The IWGOO will also provide interagency coordination of major, continuing activities such as data management and communications, as well as modeling and analysis and other issues.

As with any transition there are likely to be questions. To contact the IWGOO now supported through the Consortium for Ocean Leadership, which also hosts the National Oceanographic Partnership Program, please call Ben Chicoski at 202-448-1222, or the NOAA IOOS Program Office at 301-427-2420. The Ocean.US web site will be maintained as a legacy resource, and a timeline of Ocean.US activities including access to all workshop reports and documents can be found at <http://www.ocean.us>.

Many partners and collaborators over the past eight years, along with the Ocean.US staff, have contributed to successfully planning IOOS through their creativity, dedication and hard work - efforts that will continue to bear fruit in the future. They deserve the compliments and gratitude of the ocean observing community for the progress that has been made. These efforts have provided a solid foundation on which to build; our collective commitment to successfully continue the work will be the best recognition of these efforts.

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Chair, IWGOO