

## **NATIONAL FEDERATION OF REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

Alaska Ocean Observing System (AOOS) ♦ Northwest Association of Networked Ocean Observing Systems (NANOOS) ♦ Central and Northern California Ocean Observing System (CeNCOOS) ♦ Southern California Coastal Ocean Observing System (SCCOOS) ♦ Pacific Island Integrated Ocean Observing System (PacIOOS) ♦ Gulf of Mexico Coastal Ocean Observing System (GCOOS) ♦ Caribbean Integrated Ocean Observing System (CarIOOS) ♦ Southeast Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association (SECOORA) ♦ Mid-Atlantic Coastal Ocean Observing Regional Association (MACOORA) ♦ Gulf of Maine Ocean Observing System (GoMOOS) ♦ Great Lakes Observing System (GLOS)

*Providing the Regional Teamwork to Develop an Integrated Ocean Observing System*

Dr. Jack Kaye  
Director, Research Division  
NASA Office of Earth Science  
NASA HQ - Mail Code YS  
Washington, DC 20546

Dear Dr. Kaye;

On behalf of the IOOS National Federation of Regional Associations (NFRA), we provide to you, as Chair of the Ocean.US Executive Committee, the following recommendations that were formally adopted at the NFRA Governing Committee meeting in Washington, D.C. on May 2 and presented at the Second IOOS Implementation Workshop on May 3<sup>rd</sup>. We take this action to buttress the report of the Second IOOS Implementation Workshop with some specific concerns and recommendations from the Regional Associations (RAs) and the NFRA.

Confirming the unanimous view of the NFRA, 2005 Regional funding priorities remain exactly the same as those developed at the First IOOS Implementation Workshop in 2004. Specifically, our priorities are:

- Fund RAs and NFRA sufficiently;
- Fund national and Regional DMAC efforts; and
- Fund Regional pilot projects.

Cost estimates were provided for these efforts at the First IOOS Implementation Workshop.

Other Regional input provided at the recent IOOS Workshop identified the following three topics that we feel will be well served by accepting our indicated recommendations:

- The Regions appreciate the recent NDBC solicitation of Regional priorities for enhancing the NOAA buoy component of the National Backbone, but suggest that improved coordination from all NOPP agencies on Backbone enhancement prioritization is needed. Accordingly, we offer the following related recommendations:
  - Recommendation 1: Federal agencies should recognize the RAs as the primary structure for RCOOS development and the main conduit from which to gather information on Regional priorities for Backbone enhancement.
  - Recommendation 2: Ocean.US, NOPP agencies and the RAs should develop an enhanced pathway for RA input into the IOOS DMAC decision process.
- The role of the National Backbone in the IOOS continues to cause confusion in many of the Regions. It would be useful to better define the specific nature and components

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of the National Backbone, especially as it evolves through time. This action could involve identifying what components make up the Backbone, who is responsible for its operation and funding for capitalization and maintenance, and how priorities are developed for its enhancement. Accordingly, we recommend:

- Recommendation 3: Ocean.US, the NFRA and NOPP agencies should convene and empower a Standing Working Group to better define this vital component of the IOOS.
- The Regional Associations and the NFRA strongly concur with the need for highly qualified leadership in leading the interagency implementation of the IOOS. Thus, we support and applaud the recent release of the national solicitation for the next Ocean.US Director. Since the Regions have a substantial stake in future RCOOS development and thus a profound interest in the selection process for the next Director, we recommend the following:
  - Recommendation 4: The NFRA should be formally granted a voting position on the Search Committee for the next Ocean.US Director.

In addition, there were a number of other concerns and issues that were identified by NFRA members relating to development of the IOOS and in particular the Regional Associations (RAs) and RCOOSs. These require follow-up in the near future:

#### Issues requiring follow-up

1. It is critical that federal agencies be permitted to participate on Regional Association boards as equal members with full voting rights. The NOAA IOOS Coordination Team and the NFRA Executive Committee are working on this issue.
2. The extent of Regional liability in implementing an RCOOS has been identified as a potential concern, and some solutions have been included in proposed legislation. What happens in the interim? How can the provision of Regional ocean data and information products be indemnified?
3. The formal process for Regional Association certification needs to be finalized. Perhaps an “interim” certification can be put in place so that the Regional Associations can be approved. One option would be to provide a 3-year window before requiring “recertification” using a more extensive and formal process.

The following issues/concerns are presented for your general information. We have no specific recommendations to make on them at this time, and they don’t necessarily represent the concerns of all regions. However, we thought it important for you to be aware of them.

#### Regional Association Organization

- IOOS is a user-driven program. Clarification would be helpful regarding the roles of outreach vs. stakeholder involvement vs. marketing vs. product development as part of the Regional Association certification process.

#### IOOS Outreach

- Outreach to the private sector should be continued, and the Regional Associations are willing and able to help with this effort.

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- We need to continue to work at developing coordinated national messages on ocean observing programs so that all IOOS Stakeholders deliver the same message and that we are mutually careful not to either oversell or undersell the program.

#### IOOS Development

- Biological & chemical monitoring will never make the top 5 recommended enhancements to either the National Backbone or the Regional Observing Systems if they must always compete with physical monitoring needs.
- All regions need to support long time series – stations, survey lines, processes.
- We need to develop mechanisms for interaction with atmospheric and terrestrial observing systems as part of a ‘whole earth’ observing system.
- We have concerns regarding future federal support for coastal ships and aircraft. Many of the Regions rely on ship and aircraft time to support our observing systems. It is essential that the national fleets be upgraded and financially supported.

We hope you find these recommendations and observations helpful and look forward to working with you on developing a strong IOOS based on the three interdependent pillars of a Global module and a Coastal module having National Backbone and Regional components.

Sincerely,



David L. Martin

NFRA Governing Committee Co-chairs



Molly McCammon

Copy to: Ocean.US EXCOM  
Director, Ocean.US