



National Association of Marine Laboratories

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Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and
NOAA Administrator
Herbert C. Hoover Building
14th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear VADM Lautenbacher:

As you know, President Bush signed the FY 2007 Year-Long Joint Funding Resolution (H.J. Res. 20) into law last week, thereby providing appropriations to most of the federal government, including NOAA, through September 30, 2007. As President of the National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML), I am writing to express to you the unique opportunity NOAA now has to demonstrate its recognition of the vital importance of supporting extramural research activities as key part in the execution of the agency's missions.

NAML is a nonprofit organization of over 120 institutions employing more than 10,000 scientists, engineers, and professionals and representing ocean, coastal and Great Lakes laboratories stretching from Maine to the Gulf of Mexico to the west coast, from Guam to Bermuda and from Alaska to Puerto Rico. NAML labs support the conduct of high quality ocean, coastal and Great Lakes research and education in the natural and social sciences and the effective use of that science for decision-making on important issues that face our country. We are careful stewards of federally-funded research involving the oceans, coasts and Great Lakes and, thanks to our local connections, have the ability to bring the excitement of ocean and marine research, science and education to all Americans. NOAA's mission is central to defining the research activities and directions of NAML laboratories.

Under the joint funding resolution NOAA is given a substantial amount of discretion in the allocation of its appropriations in FY 2007. NAML is hopeful that NOAA will use this discretion to demonstrate a meaningful response to a key point advanced by the Research Review Team's *Review of the Organization and Management of Research in NOAA* which said, among other things, "NOAA cannot accomplish its goals without the extramural community, specifically the universities and institutions that represent the broad range of expertise and resources across the physical, biological, and social sciences. Moreover, there is the important issue of maintaining a scientific and technologically competent workforce in NOAA and that workforce is another 'product' of the external research community."

The National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML) is a nonprofit organization of over 120 member institutions representing coastal, marine, and Great Lakes laboratories in every coastal state, stretching from Guam to Bermuda and Alaska to Puerto Rico. Members serve as unique "windows on the sea," providing information on the rich environmental mosaic of coastal habitats as well as offshore oceanic regions and the Great Lakes. NAML member laboratories conduct research and provide a variety of academic, education and public service programs to enable local and regional communities to better understand and manage the ocean, coastal and Great Lake environments. NAML is comprised of three regional associations: the Northeastern Association of Marine and Great Lakes Laboratories (NEAMGLL); the Southern Association of Marine Laboratories (SAML); and the Western Association of Marine Laboratories (WAML).

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We understand and appreciate the difficult decisions NOAA is forced to make year-to-year. For the time remaining in FY 2007, we hope NOAA will make a concerted effort to enhance its partnerships with the external research and education community.

One program that has shown its worth as an integral component of NOAA's extramural research, education and outreach enterprise is the National Sea Grant College Program. NAML is very supportive of this program and we are quite concerned that the recent under-funding of the program is having a number of adverse consequences. Given the value of this program in meeting the needs of the nation — from fostering healthy marine ecosystems, to seafood safety, and economically viable and safe coastal communities — and being consistent with the goals and objectives of the new Ocean Research Priorities Plan — we urge NOAA to strengthen the funding for this important program via the discretion available to the agency in FY 2007.

In addition, NAML strongly recommends that NOAA give priority support to the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System and the Ocean Exploration and Research initiative which includes the National Undersea Research Program. These are important collaborative efforts between the external community and NOAA that represent ways forward in addressing the priorities laid out in the recently released Ocean Research Priorities Plan. NAML was a very active participant in the development of this plan and we are pleased the President's FY 2008 budget has begun to address various ocean, coastal and Great Lakes research and education issues with the additional funds in the FY 2008 NOAA budget request. The FY 2007 appropriation may give NOAA an opportunity to "jump start" this plan and urge you to do, while involving the external community, to the maximum extent possible. We look forward to supporting and working with NOAA and the rest of the interagency Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology in the execution of the plan in the coming months and years.

Thank you for the opportunity to express these views. If you have any questions or comments for NAML, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



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