



National Association of Marine Laboratories

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July 17, 2007

Honorable Bart Gordon
Chairman
Committee on Science and Technology
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Ralph Hall
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Science and Technology
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Gordon and Ranking Member Hall:

On behalf of the National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML) we express our support for H.R. 2342, the National Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System (NICOOS) Act of 2007 (this bill has also been included in H.R. 2337, the Energy Policy Reform and Revitalization Act as Section 464). This legislation, authored by Congressman Tom Allen, advances a key recommendation of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative to establish an infrastructure for integrated ocean observations that will reap benefits for the research and education enterprise, climate and weather monitoring, national security as well as human and coastal community safety. The bill has been referred to the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on Science and Technology.

As an organization representing over 120 coastal and Great Lakes marine laboratories from around the country, NAML recognizes the value of thorough and comprehensive knowledge of our oceans, coasts, and marine resources. Through its national and regional networks, NAML members are actively involved in ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes scientific research and education. Our network of marine laboratories acts as an interface between the science of the oceans and the education and outreach activities that create social value from that research.

Integrated observations offer important information on coastal processes necessary for addressing issues, such as the health of humans and marine life, weather and climate forecasts, homeland security, and natural resource management. Coastal and marine laboratories have been addressing this need for years – but primarily on a regional ad hoc basis.

NAML members strongly support efforts to establish an integrated ocean observing system and were pleased when the President's budget for FY 2008 requested funding for the start of such a program. While the amount requested by the Administration falls far short of existing investments and the current and future needs of the system, we applaud the Administration for taking this first step toward the development of such a program. Congress now has an opportunity to move this important program to the next level and we hope you and your colleagues will find a way to make NICOOS a reality.

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).

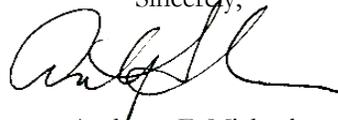
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NAML would like to offer some comments on the NICOOS legislation for Congressional consideration. NAML supports the proposal to designate NOAA as the lead agency for managing this initiative. NOAA should take lead responsibility for the integration of ocean observations as they relate to serving the public's interest. Marine laboratories, such as those represented by NAML, have an intimate knowledge of the issues affecting the localities in which they are located. NAML labs are in a position to help interpret the data being collected by these observing systems in a manner that will be useful to the decision makers at the state and local level. NAML labs look forward to working closely with the regional associations established by the legislation. Finally, while the House bill mentions research throughout, there is no explicit section (as there is in S. 950) that addresses funding for extramural research, technology development and education. Research, technology development and education are all key features for a successful integrated ocean observing system and the extramural research and education community – such as the members of NAML – is uniquely positioned to play a vital role in the success of this program. We respectfully urge the Committee to acknowledge the role of the extramural research and education community as the Committee continues its work to develop this legislation.

NAML is grateful that there is a renewed interest in this legislation in the Congress at this time. We are hopeful that this provision, whether it remains within HR 2337 or is adopted as a “standalone” bill, ultimately receives the support necessary to be signed into law.

Thank you for the opportunity to express these views. Please do not hesitate to contact me if NAML can help you and Committee in anyway on this matter.

Sincerely,



Anthony F. Michaels

President, National Association of Marine Laboratories
Director, Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies
University of Southern California



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