



National Association of Marine Laboratories

FY 2026-2027 PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

October 2025

Background

The National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML) represents over 100 marine science laboratories across 29 states, island nations, and U.S. territories. These labs: 1. Generate essential data and guidance for sustainable use of marine, coastal, and Great Lakes resources. 2. Provide workforce training, education, and professional development. 3. Strengthen coastal communities and local economies. This network of place-based laboratories is a unique U.S. national asset. Their geographic reach spans estuaries, the coastal zone, the Great Lakes, inland watersheds, the global ocean, including polar regions—and the seafloor. NAML connects scientists, students, public leaders, and policymakers with cutting-edge science and environmental intelligence to support stewardship of ocean and coastal systems. The Blue Economy—spanning maritime transportation, offshore energy, fisheries, aquaculture, finance, tourism, real estate, and more—generates an estimated \$2.5 trillion annually worldwide and is expected to double within the next decade. Sustaining this growth depends on scientific knowledge, technology, and workforce development which NAML laboratories support.

Policy Priorities

1. Research, Infrastructure, and Ocean Discovery

- Expand investment in multidisciplinary research, observation networks, and the academic research fleet to advance ocean discovery and innovation.
- Protect and modernize lab infrastructure, instrumentation, and technologies essential for exploring 95% of the ocean that remains largely unknown.
- Advocate for strong funding of extramural, competitive research across NSF, NOAA, NASA, EPA, DOI, USGS, and related agencies.

2. Data Stewardship and Applied Research

- Safeguard long-term data sets and databases critical to hazard mitigation, ecosystem management, and economic decision-making.
- Enhance NAML's communication infrastructure—including websites, dashboards, and regional networks—to share knowledge, best practices, and actionable insights with communities, agencies, and industry.
- Prioritize outreach to urban and coastal communities disproportionately affected by extreme weather and climate impacts.

3. Workforce Development and U.S. Competitiveness

- Train adaptable, multi-skilled professionals to meet emerging challenges in ocean science, policy, and the Blue Economy.
- Expand ocean education and vocational programs that connect research to real-world products, services, and industry needs.
- Strengthen the ocean workforce to expand U.S. innovation and competitiveness internationally.

4. Communication and Strategic Engagement

- Frame issues around local economic benefits, community well-being, and national resilience to secure bipartisan support.
- Leverage shared expertise among marine labs to address common challenges facing nonprofit institutions.
- Position NAML member labs as indispensable assets to national priorities in commerce, food security, defense, and climate resilience.

U.S. Benefits

These investments directly support:

1. Economic vitality of coastal and Great Lakes communities.
2. Resilient ecosystems and sustainable resource management.
3. Food security.
4. A growing and competitive Blue Economy.
5. U.S. leadership in global commerce and ocean innovation.
6. National defense and security.

Conclusion

NAML urges Congress and federal agencies to provide robust and sustained investment in ocean and coastal research, infrastructure, education, and workforce development. By advancing science-based knowledge and strengthening partnerships, NAML laboratories ensure that the United States remains a global leader in ocean discovery, innovation, and stewardship—while protecting communities, economies, and ecosystems at home.