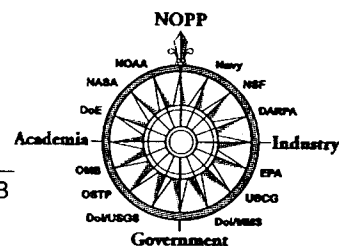


National Oceanographic Partnership Program

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National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP)

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

For Establishing A

NOPP Interagency Ocean Observation Office

1. **BACKGROUND.** The statutory authority for the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP), with representatives from twelve (12) Federal agencies, its National Ocean Research Leadership Council (NORLC), and the Ocean Research Advisory Panel (ORAP) is contained in 10 USC 7901 et seq. In response to a Congressional request for “a plan to achieve a truly integrated ocean observing system,” the report “Toward a U.S. Plan for an Integrated, Sustained Ocean Observing System” was prepared by a joint federal/non-federal Task Team. This led to a set of implementing recommendations in the report “An Integrated Ocean Observing System: A Strategy for Implementing the First Steps of a U.S. Plan” that was delivered in December 1999. On May 22, 2000, based on the ORAP Report implementation recommendations, the NORLC approved the establishment of an office having the charter to develop a national capability for integrating and sustaining ocean observations and predictions. The formation of this OCEAN.US office was jointly announced by the Chief of Naval Research, the Administrator of NOAA, and the President of the Consortium for Ocean Research and Education on May 25, 2000, at a joint hearing of the House Resources Subcommittee on Fisheries, Conservation, Wildlife, and Oceans and the Armed Services Subcommittee on Military Research and Development to examine the status of implementing the recommendations of the ORAP report.

This interagency OCEAN.US Office has as its goal over the next decade to integrate existing and planned elements to establish a sustained ocean observing system to meet the common research and operational agency needs in the following areas:

- Detecting and forecasting oceanic components of climate variability
 - Facilitating safe and efficient marine operations
 - Ensuring national security
 - Managing resources for sustainable use
 - Preserving and restoring healthy marine ecosystems
 - Mitigating natural hazards
 - Ensuring public health
2. **PURPOSE.** This Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) outlines the initial functions and responsibilities agreed to by the participating agencies to establish the interagency ocean observation office/organization known as the OCEAN.US Office. The Office will serve as the

national focal point for integrating ocean observing activities.

3. **AUTHORITY**. This interagency OCEAN.US Office is a functioning entity of, and established under the auspices of, the National Oceanographic Partnership Program, as established by the National Oceanographic Partnership Act (10 USC 7901 et seq). OCEAN.US functions or actions will not conflict with mission prerogatives or regulatory responsibilities of the participating agencies.

4. **DEFINITIONS**.

a. **Observation and Prediction System**. The integrated ocean observation system will be a heterogeneous, distributed system of linked elements, with organizational structures and interfaces developed where common good is identified (e.g., a federation) in the manner described by "An Integrated Ocean Observing System: A Strategy for Implementing the First Steps of a U.S. Plan." OCEAN.US will be the focal point for relating U.S. ocean observing system elements to the international Global Ocean Observing System. The primary purpose is to enhance broad user access to ocean knowledge, data, tools and products. In appropriate cases, the OCEAN.US Office will establish, fund, and provide for the operation of components of the observing system whose functionality cuts across the roles and interests of the individual participating agencies. Examples might include network links, master databases and indexes, or collaborative tools and services. The system, therefore, will be a virtual system, consisting of the physical links, servers, and other elements that contribute to the mission, regardless of their ownership or operational responsibility. The system will comprise four main activities:

- operational and routine ocean observations ("data access")
- long-term research observations ("observatories")
- technology development to support the OCEAN.US objectives ("tools"), and
- a web-based "commons" for access to models, algorithms, numerical techniques, etc. to foster improved predictions by the users.

The OCEAN.US Office will integrate and coordinate assigned elements within these four areas. Further, the Office will foster and integrate linkages among the many other agency and partner elements in these areas.

b. **Functioning Bodies**. The following bodies are established by this Agreement:

- (1). **NORLC OCEAN OBSERVATIONS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (EXCOM)**. The NORLC Ocean Observations EXCOM will be composed of the NOPP Agency heads (or their designees) for the Agencies that are both party to this Agreement and who provide personnel or resources to the OCEAN.US Office. The Chair of the NORLC will designate the Chair of the EXCOM. The Chair of the EXCOM will be from an Agency other than the Chair of the NORLC. With regard to the OCEAN.US Office, the EXCOM will provide policy guidance, ensure sustained Agency support, and approve implementing documents.
- (2). **OCEAN.US Office**. The OCEAN.US Office will initially establish and have cognizance over the ocean observation federation - as defined above - and, as it evolves over time, other appropriate components of a more encompassing ocean observation and

prediction federation as defined by the EXCOM. It will initially have a Director and Deputy Director appointed by the EXCOM and will include other technical representatives from the EXCOM Agencies and a modest administrative/support staff, as appropriate. Other agencies and partners may be represented at appropriate times through the invitation of the EXCOM or the Office. The Office will function as an official Federal Government office via assignment of its staff from the NOPP Federal Agencies.

- (3). Director of the OCEAN.US Office. The Director of the OCEAN.US Office will be selected by the EXCOM. The selection process will seek to achieve balance across the participating Agencies.

c. Project Categories. Elements of the system may be regarded as “NOPP-funded,” “NOPP-coordinated,” or “NOPP-related.” Elements in the first two categories are to eventually become fully integrated elements of the ocean observation and prediction system by the signatories of this Agreement. NOPP-related elements, while not directly integrated, also can provide valuable data, information, tools or products of interest to the user community.

- (1) NOPP-funded elements are a result of a NOPP solicitation and/or selection process, which is to say, approved by the NORLC and in accordance with overall NOPP objectives. These elements must adhere to the integrating conventions established by the OCEAN.US Office and approved by the NORLC/EXCOM. Once accepted as an element in this category, the sponsoring agency must notify the NORLC of its intent to withdraw.
- (2) NOPP-coordinated elements are ongoing and new activities of one or more NOPP agencies and partners which are offered to the NORLC for integration with the observation system. These elements will adhere to the data access and documentation conventions of the Federation established by the OCEAN.US Office and approved by the NORLC EXCOM at the cost of the offering agency. Once accepted as an element in this category, the sponsoring agency must notify the NORLC of its intent to withdraw.
- (3) NOPP-related elements are ongoing and new activities of agencies and/or adjunct partners (including, for instance, international partnering) which are offered to the NORLC for coordination with the integrated observation system activities.

5. **FUNCTIONS & RESPONSIBILITIES.** This undertaking requires active participation of the involved parties. Further, the Office is of substantive interest in its promotion of collaboration between agencies, in providing information useful for assisting agencies in the development of their budget submissions, and in ensuring compatibility and interoperability.

The EXCOM Agencies will support the OCEAN.US Office by (1) designating agency representative(s), as needed, and/or (2) providing adequate funding support to the Office. Costs for operating the Office intend to be shared among the Agency participants at levels commensurate with their involvement. Each Agency will be responsible for supporting its staff seconded to the

OCEAN.US Office. Transfer of funds or personnel for this effort will be made pursuant to other appropriate authorities, agreements or by amendment to this agreement.

The OCEAN.US Office will:

- (1) Develop and maintain a document outlining the long-range vision of an integrated ocean observation and prediction federation. This document will serve as the conceptual foundation for the federation and will delineate the desired goal of a fully integrated and sustained ocean observation and prediction capability for the nation.
 - (2) Ensure integration of the elements of the observing system.
 - (3) Serve as the focal point to coordinate OCEAN.US observing system activities with the NOPP Interagency Working Group (IWG), the Ocean Research Advisory Panel (ORAP), and the Federal Oceanographic Facilities Council (FOFC) as well as other federal and non-federal partners, and with the international community.
 - (4) Report regularly to the EXCOM for guidance and the IWG for coordination. Provide an annual assessment of the observing system status, products and planned directions including results of external reviews, as appropriate.
 - (5) Recommend enhancements to existing systems, new projects, need for research and development, and identification of system components suitable to transition from research to operations.
 - (6) Carry out all other tasks as directed by the NORLC.
6. **DATA.** All NOPP agencies and affiliated partners will provide data required to support OCEAN.US operations, research, and education efforts in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies of the participating agencies.
7. **REVIEWS.** An initial external review of the OCEAN.US program will be conducted after an appropriate startup period as determined by the EXCOM. Regular external reviews will take place periodically thereafter.
8. **PERIOD OF AND PARTIES TO THE AGREEMENT.** This MOA, and thus the establishment of the OCEAN.US Office, shall be effective upon signatures from four NORLC Agencies and is subject to availability of funds. It may be modified by mutual agreement of all the parties, usually by the addition of an Appendix or Annex. Signatory parties may terminate their participation with six (6) months formal notice to all other parties via the NORLC. All NOPP agencies are eligible to participate as active parties to this agreement by affixing a signature of the Agency to this MOA. Other governmental organizations and entities may be recognized as adjunct partners to this agreement by consideration and approval of the National Oceanographic Research Leadership Council (NORLC) upon receipt of a signed statement agreeing to the principles of the MOA, as appropriate to that partner.