

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

**LEGISLATIVE HEARING BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES, WILDLIFE, OCEANS AND INSULAR AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

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Introduction

Good morning Chairman Fleming, Ranking Member Sablan, and Members of the Subcommittee. My name is Gerd Glang, and I am the Director of the Office of Coast Survey at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), within the Department of Commerce. Thank you for inviting NOAA to testify before you today on several pieces of legislation pending before the Committee.

NOAA is an agency that enriches life through science. From daily weather forecasts and severe storm warnings, to fisheries management, coastal restoration and supporting maritime commerce, NOAA's products and services support economic vitality and affect more than one-third of America's gross domestic product. NOAA's dedicated scientists use cutting-edge research and high-tech instrumentation to provide citizens, planners, emergency managers and other decision makers with the reliable information they need.

NOAA's roots date back to 1807, when the Nation's first scientific agency, the Survey of the Coast, was established by President Thomas Jefferson. Since then, NOAA has evolved to meet the needs of an evolving country. NOAA maintains a presence in every state and has emerged as an international leader on scientific and environmental matters.

H.R. 553 – A bill to designate the United States Exclusive Economic Zone the “Ronald Wilson Reagan Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States”

The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the United States is a zone contiguous to the territorial sea of the United States and generally extends 200 nautical miles from the U.S. coast line, except in places where it would extend into or overlap with a 200 nautical mile EEZ of an adjacent nation. The EEZ applies to waters adjacent to the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (consistent with the Covenant and UN Trusteeship Agreement), and United States territories and possessions. The U.S. EEZ is the largest in the world, spanning over 13,000 miles of coastline and containing 3.4 million square nautical miles of ocean—larger than the combined land area of all fifty states.

The U.S. EEZ was established by President Ronald Reagan through Proclamation 5030 of March 10, 1983, which affirmed that within the EEZ, the U.S. has, to the extent permitted by

international law, sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring, exploiting, conserving and managing natural resources, whether living or nonliving, of the seabed and subsoil and the superjacent waters and with regard to other activities for the economic exploitation and exploration of the zone, such as the production of energy from the water, currents, and winds. The Proclamation also affirmed that the U.S. has jurisdiction, to the extent permitted by international law, with regard to the establishment and use of artificial islands, installations, and structures having economic purposes and the protection and preservation of the marine environment. Many government agencies, including the Department of Commerce and NOAA in particular, carry out functions in the EEZ.

H.R. 553 would designate the EEZ as the “Ronald Wilson Reagan Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States”. The bill would deem any reference to the EEZ in a law, regulation, map, document, paper, or other record of the United States to be a reference to the “Ronald Wilson Reagan Exclusive Economic Zone of the United States”. Although the geographical range of the EEZ is relevant to certain elements of NOAA’s jurisdiction, such as the management of Federal fisheries, the naming of the EEZ does not affect any of NOAA’s existing authorities or programs. NOAA notes that it is not aware of any precedent for a designation of this type. Therefore, NOAA takes no position on H.R. 553.

H.R. 1308 – the Endangered Salmon and Fisheries Predation Prevention Act

H.R. 1308 is identical to H.R. 3069 introduced in the 112th Congress and similar to H.R. 946 also introduced in the 112th Congress. Mr. James Lecky, former Director of the Office of Protected Resources for NMFS, testified about H.R. 946 before the Committee on June 14, 2011.¹

I would like to offer several updates to Mr. Lecky’s testimony for the Subcommittee’s consideration. First, sea lions continue to thrive in California and the Pacific Northwest. The latest estimate of California sea lion abundance stands at just under 300,000 (the estimate in 2011 was 238,000). The Eastern stock of Steller sea lions has experienced substantial gains over the years to the point where, on April 18, 2012, NMFS proposed its removal from the list of threatened species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). A final determination on whether the stock should be delisted is expected soon. Both sea lion species continue to prey on fish stocks in the Columbia River basin including ESA protected salmon, steelhead, and eulachon, and a declining population of non-listed white sturgeon in the mainstem Columbia River, and most recently in the Willamette River.

The States of Oregon and Washington continue to exercise their authority to permanently remove specific California sea lions as provided for under Section 120 of the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). Since receiving removal authority in 2008, the States have permanently removed (to captivity or euthanized) 55 California sea lions that were having a significant negative impact on the recovery of ESA listed salmonids (salmon and steelhead). Since peaking in 2008, the same year NOAA issued the States’ first removal authorization, the average daily presence of California sea lions immediately below Bonneville Dam has dropped to a number

¹ <http://www.legislative.noaa.gov/Testimony/Lecky061411.pdf>

that is about the same as when systematic monitoring of the sea lion conflict at Bonneville Dam began in 2002. Nonetheless, California sea lions maintain a strong presence at the Dam and were responsible for half of the adult salmonid predation there this spring. The United States Army Corps of Engineers calculated an expanded sea lion predation estimate of just over 2,000 salmonids killed during the 2012 and 2013 winter/spring runs. This is less than the high of more than 6,000 salmonids estimated killed during the 2010 winter/spring run but remains significant. Many variables can affect predation so we cannot yet conclude that the sea lion removal program caused the decline in salmonid consumption. Nevertheless, the decreased consumption of adult salmonids by California sea lions below Bonneville Dam is encouraging.

Several aspects of H.R. 1308 are consistent with our 1999 Report to Congress titled *Impacts of California Sea Lions and Pacific Harbor Seals on Salmonids and West Coast Ecosystems*. The bill identifies and aims to address the complicated and controversial wildlife management conflict we face on the Columbia River today. It correctly recognizes that: non-lethal methods alone may not be enough to protect salmonids from sea lion predation; many agencies, organizations, and the public have made enormous investments to conserve and recover at-risk salmonid populations in the Columbia River basin; Steller sea lion predation on non-salmonids (e.g., sturgeon) is a growing problem; and federally-recognized tribes should be included in addressing this conflict.

As currently drafted, the bill temporarily suspends the current requirements that we (1) “individually identify pinnipeds which are having a significant negative impact on the decline or recovery of salmonid fisheries stocks...” and (2) establish a pinniped-fishery interaction task force. The bill additionally dictates a temporary suspension of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). While we appreciate the bill’s attempt to streamline procedures necessary to take action, our goal throughout this management conflict has been to achieve a balance between protecting marine mammals under the MMPA and recovering ESA-listed salmonids. With that in mind, we are careful in how and when we take action to authorize lethal removal of California sea lions to protect listed salmonids. Our experience exercising the current Section 120 authorization benefitted from both the requirement to establish a pinniped-fishery interaction task force and the environmental review process under NEPA. We would support legislative solutions to streamlining procedures that would also allow adequate time to complete these reviews. We would be happy to further discuss this and potential solutions with the Committee.

Besides the streamlining concerns noted above, there are a few operational challenges presented by the bill as drafted. Coordinating the activity of multiple permit holders to ensure that they stay under the one percent annual potential biological removal level could be challenging. This could be especially difficult to track if multiple permits are issued to different “eligible entities” who in turn further delegate their authority to additional entities. It is also the opinion of both NOAA and of State fish and wildlife managers that relatively few sea lions in the Columbia are responsible for the majority of the predation on salmon, steelhead, and other fish species. If this bill moves forward, we suggest consideration of criteria that could be used to help identify those sea lions for which removal might make sense (e.g., distance upriver).

In conclusion, the MMPA has provided strong protections for all marine mammals, regardless of their population status, for more than 40 years. The Administration believes that in some cases active wildlife management programs may be necessary to mitigate pinniped-fishery conflicts,

and that such management should remain consistent with the purposes and policies of the MMPA. We appreciate this bill's recognition of that need and stand ready to work with the Committee to update the bill's Section 2 Findings and address our concerns with the bill.

H.R. 1399 – the Hydrographic Services Improvement Amendments Act of 2013

H.R. 1399 would amend the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act (HSIA) of 1998 in four ways: authorizing HSIA activities through Fiscal Year (FY) 2017; specifically authorizing hydrographic data collection in the U.S. Arctic for navigation safety and extended Continental Shelf (ECS) delineation; limiting administrative expenses for hydrographic surveys; and mandating a Government Accountability Office (GAO) study of NOAA in-house and contract hydrographic surveys. My testimony will address each of these issues in order.

H.R. 1399 proposes to reauthorize HSIA through FY 2017 at the same levels authorized for FY 2012. While NOAA supports HSIA reauthorization, some of these funding levels are less than what Congress appropriated for FY 2013 and what the President requested in NOAA's FY 2014 budget. For example, the President's FY 2014 budget request for NOAA includes \$75.1 million for Mapping and Charting activities (not including \$26.9 million to contract for hydrographic surveys), whereas H.R. 1399 authorizes \$58 million. Further, NOAA's FY 2014 request includes \$31.8 million for Tide and Current activities, compared to an authorization amount in H.R. 1399 of \$28.5 million. Setting funding authorizations at their current levels may arbitrarily impinge upon the discretion and ability of future Congresses and the Administration to prioritize funding based on existing national priorities and needs. In addition, we recommend that H.R. 1399 be amended to authorize these activities through FY 2018, and we note that the Act inadvertently exchanges the authorization amounts for "operate hydrographic survey vessels" and "carry out geodetic functions."

With respect to the Arctic, NOAA supports the legislation's intent to recognize the Arctic as a region in particular need of NOAA hydrographic services for safe navigation, management of coastal change, and delineation of the ECS. NOAA's 2011 Arctic Vision and Strategy identifies these same services as fundamental to navigation safety, coastal community resilience, maritime security, environmental protection, coastal resource management, and energy development. More recently, NOAA's charting mission was identified as essential in both the May 2013 *National Strategy for the Arctic Region* and the U.S. Coast Guard's *Arctic Strategy*, to ensure safe, secure, and environmentally responsible Arctic maritime activity and Arctic Region stewardship.

Although NOAA has no major concerns with this section, our existing authorities include the Arctic. Therefore, specific authorization for NOAA is not necessary to work in the Arctic. NOAA notes that H.R. 1399 does not geographically define the U.S. Arctic, but in general and for the purposes of this testimony, NOAA uses the definition provided in the Arctic Research and Policy Act of 1984.²

² The Arctic Research and Policy Act of 1984 defines 'Arctic' as "all United States and foreign territory north of the Arctic Circle and all United States territory north and west of the boundary formed by the Porcupine, Yukon, and Kuskokwim Rivers; all contiguous seas, including the Arctic Ocean and the Beaufort, Bering and Chukchi Seas; and the Aleutian chain."

Historically, remote Arctic waters have been relatively inaccessible with low levels of maritime commerce. As a result, the region currently has:

- limited geospatial infrastructure for accurate positioning and elevations;
- sparse tide, current, and water level datum and prediction coverage;
- obsolete shoreline and hydrographic data in most areas;
- poor nautical charts; and
- limited weather and ice forecast data.

As sea ice retreats and interest in Arctic economic uses grows, NOAA is working hard to increase its Arctic presence. In recent years, and with limited resources, NOAA has invested in the following Arctic activities: reconnaissance surveys by the NOAA Ship *Fairweather* up to and along the North Slope; NOAA and contract hydrographic surveys in the Bering Strait, Kotzebue, Kuskokwim, and the Krenitzin Islands regions; ECS surveys in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Geological Survey, and Government of Canada; gravity data acquisition over northern Alaska for accurate positioning, shoreline mapping of the north slope using the best available satellite data, and Arctic-capable tide gauge testing and evaluation.

In February 2013, NOAA issued an update to its Arctic Nautical Charting Plan, which identifies regions where inadequate chart coverage should be improved, given available resources. This update was informed by consultations with maritime interests, the public, and other Federal, state, and local agencies, in order to keep pace with the rapidly changing Arctic environment and the associated increase in maritime commerce and oil and gas extraction activities. NOAA also continues to work with the State Department, U.S. Geological Survey, and other partners on ECS delineation; the data acquisition phase for this effort in the Arctic is essentially complete, and the focus has now shifted to analysis of the extent of the U.S. continental shelf under the provisions of Article 76 of the Law of the Sea Convention, as well as conducting the exploration and research necessary to identify and evaluate potential new marine resources, and to identify and characterize marine ecosystems and habitats in this rapidly changing environment . NOAA is also developing water level measurement technology that can endure the harsh climate of remote Arctic areas.

H.R. 1399 includes a provision that would limit NOAA's administrative expenses for hydrographic surveys. The bill does not specify to which funding this provision would apply, nor does it define administrative expenses, but the provision gives NOAA cause for concern. NOAA's administrative costs for hydrographic surveying and charting include data processing, long-term archiving and delivery; infrastructure; support of contract administration and oversight; data quality assurance and control; and other program management costs. NOAA does seek to limit administrative costs as much as possible to acquire more data. However, maintaining the infrastructure and expertise needed to manage contracts and hydrographic data is critical to keep charts accurate and up to date. NOAA also works to expand the utility of the data for other mission activities and gain more benefit from the initial investment in adherence to the NOAA Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping goal of mapping once and using many times. The limitation imposed by H.R. 1399 would have a detrimental impact on NOAA's ability to manage hydrographic survey contracts, process and validate hydrographic data, and apply that data to the nautical chart in a timely fashion.

Finally, the draft bill would authorize a GAO study to compare NOAA and contract survey costs. NOAA has conducted similar cost assessments in the past, and will work with the Committee and GAO to establish parameters that will help ensure a robust study. As prior comparisons demonstrate, unit costs of surveys vary significantly by year, owing largely to variations in geographical features of survey areas, total amount of data collected, and data acquisition platform, both in-house and contract. In order to properly assess the variable nature of these costs, NOAA recommends that the GAO study fully consider these factors. NOAA does track costs for both in-house and contract surveys at a high level, and uses that data to optimize its management of surveying assets. It is also important to note that NOAA's survey activity using NOAA vessels is required to maintain Federal expertise and capability in hydrographic data and services in order to oversee contracting activities, participate in emergency response actions, verify hydrographic data, set national hydrographic requirements and priorities, develop standards, and manage the Nation's civilian hydrographic and nautical charting program. NOAA has worked closely with its contract partners to maximize efficiencies and implement the most cost-effective approaches to surveying. This extremely successful public/private partnership has become essential to NOAA's capacity to survey U.S. waters and provide accurate, up-to-date nautical charts for safe navigation.

H.R. 1425 – A bill to amend the Marine Debris Act to better address severe marine debris events

Since 2006, the NOAA Marine Debris Program (MDP) has led national and international efforts to research, prevent, and reduce the impacts of marine debris. The NOAA MDP has a number of mandates through the Marine Debris Act, as amended in 2012, to address these impacts, which include: identify, determine sources of, assess, prevent, reduce, and remove marine debris; provide national and regional coordination; undertake efforts to reduce adverse impacts of lost and discarded fishing gear; conduct education and outreach; and develop interagency plans that address severe marine debris events.

NOAA continues to meet these mandates, and with its partners, make great strides in mitigating the impacts of marine debris through enhanced coordination and collaboration at all levels of government (local, state, federal), and with nongovernmental organizations, academia, private industry, and the interested public to identify and address key marine debris issues. This coordination has been particularly effective in responding to debris from severe marine debris events, such as the earthquake and tsunami that devastated Japan in 2011, which is now washing up on U.S. coastlines.

Marine debris, which can be anything from lost or abandoned fishing gear and vessels, to plastics of any size, to glass, metal, and rubber, is an on-going international problem with major impacts. In addition to being an eyesore, it can threaten oceans, coasts, wildlife, human health, safety, and navigation. Every year, unknown numbers of marine animals are injured or die because of entanglement in or ingestion of marine debris. It can scour, break, smother, or otherwise damage important marine habitat, such as coral reefs. Derelict fishing gear can also cost fishermen untold economic losses, and coastal communities collectively spend millions of dollars annually trying to prevent debris from washing up on their shorelines and trying to remove it once it does wash up.

The Marine Debris Act also requires the NOAA MDP to administer grants in order to address marine debris and its adverse impacts. To satisfy that requirement, the program offers three funding opportunities focused on removal, research, and prevention. NOAA prioritizes opportunities with the potential for reductions in impacts from marine debris, and they are offered in the form of competitive grants. Each proposal goes through a rigorous review process, and the funds are awarded as quickly as possible to selected projects.

These grants are intended to address impacts from all types of debris – impacts that come from both everyday, man-made marine debris and from severe marine debris events. HR 1425 would require the NOAA MDP to prioritize grants for projects that address severe marine debris events and, to the extent feasible, provide funds within 60 days. However, the impacts from natural disaster-generated debris are not necessarily worse than the impacts from debris that comes from everyday practices – they both have the potential to harm our natural resources and economy equally. Environmental compliance reviews are also necessary for successful grant proposals, and the funding timeline provided in the bill would likely preclude the required analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act.

The NOAA MDP's mission is to minimize the impacts from all debris, including debris from severe marine debris events, and we hope to continue to meet this mission as we administer grants. The end result is progress on all aspects of this issue, including prevention, research, and removal. We look forward to working with the Committee to address the timeline and other concerns with the bill's requirements.

H.R. 1491 – A bill to authorize the NOAA Administrator to provide funds to address marine debris impacts of the March 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami

In August 2012, NOAA provided each of the five states impacted by tsunami debris - California, Hawaii, Alaska, Oregon, and Washington - with \$50,000 from its base funds to help ease initial clean-up costs. Some states used these funds for costs they incurred before August, including Styrofoam cleanup in Alaska and removal of a large dock that washed ashore in June 2012 in Oregon.

In December 2012, the Government of Japan provided a generous gift of \$5 million to the United States, through the NOAA MDP, with the intent to support tsunami marine debris response efforts, such as removal of debris, disposal fees, cleanup supplies, detection and monitoring. We are extremely grateful to Japan and this gift is a powerful reminder of the goodwill, friendship, and spirit of mutual support.

NOAA has allocated \$1,828,000 of the gift to date. NOAA met with each of the five states to assess their immediate needs and determine how to best distribute the funds. We are now in the process of providing an initial sum of \$250,000 to each state and \$50,000 each to Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, which are the amounts agreed upon in our discussions with the states. These funds will be used to support ongoing or proposed tsunami debris projects. In addition, a 185-ton concrete and Styrofoam dock that washed out to sea during the tsunami has now been removed from Washington's Olympic Coast. The cost for the \$628,000 removal effort was paid by NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the Olympic National Park, and with \$478,000 of the Japan gift.

Absent specific legislative authority, agencies cannot obligate current funds for the *bona fide* needs of prior years. NOAA currently does not have authority to reimburse states for costs they incurred in carrying out tsunami marine debris activities prior to NOAA's receipt of the Japan gift funds.

H.R. 1491 would give the NOAA MDP broad waiver to retroactively reimburse states, using the Japan gift funds, for work on tsunami debris they have already performed. It states, "Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration may provide funds to an eligible entity impacted by the covered marine debris event to assist such entity with the costs of any activity previously carried out, being carried out, or to be carried out to address the effects of such event." If enacted, NOAA would be able to reimburse states retroactively, but only until the funds Japan has gifted are exhausted. At this time, NOAA anticipates distributing the remaining funds from Japan on a case-by-case basis, as needs arise, and we look forward to continuing work with states on this very important issue. We also look forward to working with the Committee to address these concerns and the broad nature of the legislation.

H.R. 2219 – A bill to reauthorize the Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System Act of 2009

The Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System (ICOOS) Act of 2009 authorized a comprehensive effort both to observe the ocean and provide necessary ocean services to the Nation. The ICOOS Act created broad goals for the implementation of U.S. IOOS that included a strong management and governance structure. The Act designated NOAA as the lead Federal agency, where the U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) Program Office was established in 2007 to oversee daily operations and coordination of the System. Additional management and governance structure called for in the ICOOS Act has been established. For example, the Interagency Ocean Observation Committee (IOOC) was chartered in June 2010 as a Federal interagency committee that oversees and coordinates the Federal agencies responsible for U.S. IOOS development efforts. The IOOC is co-chaired by NASA, NOAA, and NSF.

U.S. IOOS has completed or made significant progress toward full implementation of the ICOOS Act. Of the many U.S. IOOS accomplishments, some of the more notable are:

- The IOOC delivered the Independent Cost Estimate (ICE) for the System in November 2012.
- The IOOC established a process in 2010 to develop a public-private use policy.
- The IOOC published certification criteria for non-Federal assets in May 2012. NOAA has since developed program guidelines to certify non-Federal assets into U.S. IOOS. The guidelines will be published in the Federal Register for comment this summer.
- The NOAA Administrator established a System Advisory Committee in July 2012. This Federal advisory committee is composed of thirteen members who constitute a geographically diverse body, and who provide public, private, and academic sector perspectives and advice to the Administrator and to the IOOC.

These and many additional accomplishments are included in the second *U.S. IOOS Report to Congress*, which is undergoing final review by the appropriate partner agencies.

U.S. IOOS works to safeguard life and property, sustain economic vitality, and protect ecosystems. While there are many ways in which U.S. IOOS delivers societal benefits, I have selected a few to highlight in my testimony that demonstrates the value of this system to the Nation.

- The devastating impact of Hurricane Sandy was mitigated by the effective utilization of ocean data. IOOS buoys, gliders, High Frequency (HF) radars, and sensors along the Atlantic coast generated hourly updates of winds, waves, visibility, water levels, currents, and air and water temperatures. IOOS information enabled vessels in the Port of New York and New Jersey to be diverted to other east coast ports, and advance warnings provided by IOOS-derived storm surge forecasts reduced more extensive damage to property and allowed for timely evacuation orders.
- As a result of close collaboration between U.S. IOOS and NOAA's Ocean Acidification Program, Pacific Northwest oyster hatcheries, which were on the verge of collapse just a few years ago, are again major contributors to the \$111 million West Coast shellfish industry.
- Under U.S. IOOS, the U.S. has the largest network of High Frequency radars. HF radar data is used operationally in the U.S. Coast Guard's Search and Rescue Optimal Planning System (SAROPS) and is used by NOAA's forecast models to track oil spills including the Cosco Busan and Deepwater Horizon spills.
- U.S. IOOS has made significant advances in making data collected in many formats accessible and easy to use by developing national standards that will be implemented across the IOOS enterprise by mid-2014. Our Data Management and Communications subsystem ensures interoperability across the System and is the foundation for an enhanced U.S. IOOS Data Portal. Our technical collaboration with NOAA's National Data Buoy Center makes possible the dissemination of over 13 million ocean observations to the World Meteorological Organization, which contributes to accurate weather forecasts and doubled the data retrieval and processing at NOAA's Center for Operational Oceanographic Products and Services (CO-OPS) by 70%.

The successes of U.S. IOOS are achieved through collaboration and coordination among Federal agencies, U.S. IOOS Regional Associations, IOOS Advisory Committee, State and regional agencies, and the private sector in accordance with the ICOOS Act.

NOAA supports reauthorization of the ICOOS Act and appreciates the Committee's interest and support. H.R. 2219 would reauthorize the ICOOS Act through FY 2018 and I would like to include recommendations in my testimony that would help improve the implementation of U.S. IOOS.

First, NOAA recommends providing the Administrator with the authority to stagger the terms of IOOS System Advisory Committee members (33 U.S.C. 3603(d)). Although the ICOOS Act does not specifically prohibit the staggering of member terms, the requirement that individuals be appointed to three year terms creates a practical impediment to staggering the terms. This

additional authority would help NOAA ensure the retention of institutional knowledge on the System Advisory Committee by ensuring that only a portion of the committee membership leaves the committee each year.

NOAA also recommends amending the ICOOS Act to clarify the provision regarding “Interagency financing and agreements” (33 U.S.C. 3604). For maximum flexibility in administering the ICOOS Act, the amendment should enable the Secretary of Commerce to enter into agreements on a reimbursable or non-reimbursable basis. U.S. IOOS’ success is dependent on its partnership with 18 Federal Agencies, other government entities, and the private sector. The ability for NOAA to transfer funds to one or more of its IOOS partners will help further improve coordination and collaboration as well as the efficiency and success of U.S. IOOS.

Lastly, similar to the HSIA legislation, NOAA has concerns regarding the funding levels in the authorization of appropriations section of the bill. Setting funding authorizations at these levels may arbitrarily impinge upon the discretion and ability of future Congresses and the Administration to prioritize funding based on existing national priorities and needs. The bill authorizes an appropriation of \$29.6 million through FY 2018, which is significantly less than the \$34.9 million appropriated for NOAA IOOS in the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2013, before sequester and rescission. NOAA recommends the Committee amend the bill to authorize the President’s FY 2014 budget request of \$41.1 million for NOAA IOOS.

The value of U.S. IOOS to integrate ocean systems is demonstrated by its success stories. The ability of U.S. IOOS to achieve the vision of a fully integrated ocean observing system is dependent upon the continued collaborative efforts of all of its Federal agencies, regional associations, and industry partners to provide integrated data and information that inform decision-making and produce economic, societal, and environmental benefits to the Nation.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on these several pieces legislation pending before the Committee. I appreciate the Subcommittee’s time and attention to these important issues and I look forward to working with you further. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.