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Testimony of the National Association of Maritime Organizations on behalf of the
Marine Navigation Safety Coalition
July 13, 2004

FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS,
RESOURCES COMMITTEE, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Chairman Gilchrest and members of the House Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans, we thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony at the oversight hearing on the status of ocean observing systems in the United States. I am Helen A. Brohl, the Executive Director of the United States Great Lakes Shipping Association which celebrates almost fifty years of service in the Great Lakes representing vessel agents and the owner/operators of vessels engaged in international trade to U.S. Great Lakes ports. I am also serving my second term as the president of the National Association of Maritime Organizations (NAMO) which is a coalition of shipping associations and marine exchanges – from coast to coast - who promote the safe and efficient navigation of commercial vessels through the navigable waters of the United States.

For the past ten years, NAMO has been engaged with hydrographic services programs under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) National Ocean Service (NOS) Division. We are founding members of the Marine Navigation Safety Coalition (the Coalition) and I am currently the national coordinator. Previous coordination leadership has been by the American Association of Port Authorities and the National Mining Association. There are over 60 additional organizations involved with the Navigation Safety Coalition including the American Pilots Association, Chamber of Shipping of America, Intertanko, the World Shipping Counsel, National Ocean Industries Association, and the Maryland Port Administration. [Membership list attached].

NAMO and the Safety Coalition testified at your hearing in September 2001 regarding the reauthorization of the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act of 1998. Many of the maritime organizations involved with the Coalition have been directly involved in the development, design and operation of hydrographic observing systems, including local partnership cost sharing with NOAA.

Coalition members work closely with the NOS Office of Coast Survey and the Center for Operational and Oceanographic Products and Services (COOPS) who develop, operate and maintain hydrographic surveying and observation programs, respectively. These are the programs that NOAA calls the "backbone" of IOOS. Maritime is extremely dependent upon the observation programs currently provided by NOAA for safe navigation. It was at the request of maritime that COOPS integrated air gap technology on two bridges between Baltimore and the Delaware River and one on the Mississippi River which provides critical vessel clearance information to the pilot house. NOAA also intends to install three air gap gauges on the Verrazano Narrows Bridge so the Queen Mary 2 can safely transit New York Harbor. Working with Great Lakes maritime interests, COOPS upgraded the 52 water level gauges in the Great Lakes to real-time and provides that information online, by phone and by radio. This is a typical example of how maritime currently works with NOAA to identify navigation needs and utilize the latest technologies to provide for safer maritime commerce.

The Coalition supports the integration of ocean observing programs. We might describe this concept, however, as ocean and coastal observing programs. Most of the critical navigation areas for commercial shipping and other maritime operators and most of the critical resource management areas are along our Nation's coasts rather than in deep ocean areas. In any case, integration of data is a practical step for NOAA and the ten or so other governmental agencies that monitor and survey our waters. This can prevent the duplication of data collection, standardize the data domestically and in coordination with the International

Hydrographic Organization, and make it available to a larger number of stakeholders where appropriate.

We believe that a renewed emphasis on hydrographic monitoring and its sister – surveying, charting and mapping - go hand-in-hand with the Marine Transportation System initiative and is one of the most direct ways that the MTS can be enhanced for both safety and security. Subject to appropriations, of course, integration and expansion of our ocean and coastal observing systems could be done relatively quickly by using existing legislative authority under the Hydrographic Services Improvement Act of 1998 (HSIA) as amended by legislation recommended by your Subcommittee in 2002. NOAA has stated that the “backbone” programs of an IOOS or IOCOS (to include the coastal component) are the services currently provided by COOPS, which provides water level data, tides and currents, storm surge updates, and the real-time information under the Physical Oceanographic Real Time Systems or “PORTS.” When you’re on a beach vacation, you might look up the tide chart in the local newspaper. This is generated from COOPS. The maritime sector accesses the broader range of information from COOPS online, by phone, or by radio.

The Coalition views that using existing authority, and assuming that Congress provides sufficient funding for the “Tides and Currents” line item and appropriate direction in the committee report, NOAA could begin the technical work necessary to integrate and standardize data from within NOAA and from other agencies for maritime, resource, and research uses. The first step involves an inventory of existing departmental programs engaged in ocean and coastal water-related monitoring and integrating data where appropriate. Within NOAA, for example, the National Weather Service uses buoy data, COOPS uses water level gauges and PORTS sites, the Geodetic department investigates geospatial data for shoreline and coastal zone change analyses, among others. The Subcommittee might first ask NOAA to explain how information is being integrated for presentation under the current mechanisms.

The maritime sector also uses water levels data monitored by the Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Geological Survey. We believe that the NOAA should be the primary organization responsible for hydrographic monitoring and predictions for maritime because portals are already in place for ready access. We understand that Congress mandated a partnership between Navy and NOAA with regard to the “National Oceanographic Partnership” program. Perhaps this can be expanded to include other interdepartmental partnerships and promote the mutual presentation of data for ready access under the existing commercial maritime access portals in COOPS.

Once the governmental agencies have integrated their data and certified its presentation to the public, the HSIA can also be used to expand monitoring points around the country. We view the existing national water level observation network as the base from which to go forward but using real-time systems as the model. The Coalition specifically inquired about what it might cost to create real-time systems around the country which would include water levels, currents, wind, temperature, GPS coordination, etc. – any data needed for researchers, resource managers, and navigation interests based upon regional and local needs. The cost is approximately \$50 million to build the sites and \$15 million per year to maintain and operate them. If Congress appropriated the full authorized levels under the HSIA and increased those levels even moderately in reauthorization, we would be well on our way to realizing that potential in just a few years.

The HSIA also provides an avenue by which local and regional interests – from navigation, resource management or research – can provide direction to NOAA on the type of information needed. The HSIA amendments of 2002 created the “Hydrographic Services Review Panel” (a FACA) to advise NOAA on hydrographic monitoring programs and services. This Panel is now in place and we highly recommend that the Subcommittee request that NOAA use this existing Panel to investigate local and regional needs. The federal advisory committee process provides a public forum by which local and regional representation could be received and an analysis presented to NOAA on those needs.

This could be coupled with the participation of existing organizations in particular regional MTS committees and local harbor safety committees. In every case with which we’re familiar, the regional MTS committees already include commercial maritime, recreational boating, environmental interests, and government representatives such as US Coast Guard, the Corps of Engineers, and NOAA. Harbor safety committees also are an excellent and quick source for recommendations on exactly what data points are needed to enhance the safety and security of a local harbor. There is a HSC in every major port in the country.

You asked us to talk about “regional systems.” The new NOAA vision for IOOS includes the creation of “regional associations.” We view these as two different issues and we are not sure to which you are referring. We would consider a “system” to be the physical equipment in place to provide hydrographic monitoring. There are no “regional systems” in place for hydrographic monitoring except in the Great Lakes

but it could be more correctly called a regional program. Because of directed funding by the Great Lakes Congressional delegation, the existing water level gauge system across the region has been expanded and those gauges enhanced for real-time observations. With just a bit more funding, the entire Great Lakes could be wired for multi-dimensional hydrographic monitoring which would satisfy everyone's needs. This work was done in a relatively short time and for relatively little cost and addressed the need for real-time data under a state of critical low water levels which threatened the safety of maritime navigation. The Great Lakes regional system was built and is maintained and operated by NOAA. The Great Lakes maritime sector wants to stay on this path with funding through the 2003 amendments to the HSIA as proposed in H.R. 958 and supported by this Subcommittee. The Coalition believes that this concept could and should be applied to the entire country through NOAA's National Water Level Observation Network and the PORTS program. The HSIA specifically provides for NOAA development, maintenance and operation of real-time systems around the country.

The Great Lakes system may be referred to as regional because all the NOAA monitoring sites in the region were upgraded together. But NOAA operates the systems and presents the data which we believe is appropriate. Recreational and commercial maritime is not dependent upon a "regional system" as much as wanting critical navigation points anywhere around the country to be monitored with data that is meaningful and useful. Frankly, the type of information needed should be determined more locally than regionally. The Coalition believes that there needs to be real-time monitoring systems at all critical navigation areas. As stated previously, we understand that an integrated system for all critical points around the country could be developed for approximately \$50 million and maintained at \$15 million per year and would include information that is meaningful for resource managers and research institutions.

We understand that NOAA has a new vision of integrating hydrographic monitoring which is very different than the programs we've already mentioned. NOAA has provided 11 grants at \$100,000 each to academic institutions around the country to develop "regional associations" that would set policy, determine regional needs, and even provide the hydrographic monitoring services. It is a concept that the Coalition has yet to fully understand as being advantageous to the existing program. NOAA has only recently engaged maritime in the discussion and we look forward to learning more. As mentioned, many Coalition members are already involved in hydrographic monitoring partnerships with NOAA. Marine exchanges, harbor safety committees, and MTS committees would make excellent regional or local associations and coordinators and must be invited to the table. We ask the Subcommittee to ask NOAA to present a plan for engaging maritime into the grant application process and regional association development program.

The Coalition has additional questions about NOAA's vision for IOOS. It is presented as being quite massive. Dr. Richard Spinrad (assistant administrator for NOS) stated in the May 2004 Sea Technology Magazine that it is "an overwhelming task." The price tag of \$700 million for this new concept is daunting. The Coalition has struggled to convince Congress that the existing programs as authorized under the HSIA - despite the advantages of safer and more secure navigation to the environment as well as economy - deserve full funding. Under limited appropriations dollars, the Coalition is concerned that a new regional association emphasis on a brand new research-centered integrated system will diminish attention and funding for the existing programs upon which maritime is so dependent. In particular, we believe that the existing ten PORTS sites around the country deserve \$3 million in federal assistance for yearly operations and maintenance. NOAA has, thus far, rejected that notion in their annual budget recommendations, but proposes to create a \$700 million program of which \$350 million will go to academia for research. Additionally, due to limited appropriations, NOAA has not been able to provide monitoring or charting and mapping specifically directed to the 700,000 + recreational boaters in this country. Where does the commercial and recreational maritime community fit in this new research-based concept and how will Congress preserve the core programs?

We recognize that research, especially with regard to the development of new technologies, is an important partnership. NOAA already works with the private sector to adapt technology for broader hydro monitoring needs. The air gap technology used on the bridges was adapted from technology developed privately for oil platforms. NOAA also already works in partnership with universities such as the University of New Hampshire in the bathymetric surveying program. This and other academic partnerships are funded through the HSIA which the Coalition has consistently supported. We recognize the academic research component in hydrographic monitoring but question the direction in NOAA to use academic institutions to determine the hydro monitoring needs of commercial and recreational maritime operations. How many professors pilot 100,000 ton vessels or work routinely with the industry?

Once again, the Coalition supports the integration of ocean and coastal observing programs. However, we

ask the Subcommittee to build from existing programs to integrate and enhance hydrographic monitoring in the United States and with other nations. The International Maritime Organization states that there are four cornerstones of a hydrographic office. They are:

- To ensure that hydrographic surveying is carried out in a manner adequate for safe navigation,
- To prepare and issue nautical charts, sailing directions, lists of lights, tide tables, and other nautical publications, where applicable, satisfying the needs of safe navigation,
- To promulgate notices to mariners in order that nautical charts and publications are kept up to date; and
- To provide data management arrangements to support these services.

Resource management information should be incorporated as a positive byproduct of a national program to monitor critical navigational areas and technology research is an integral partner to provide more and better ways to meet the four cornerstones. The maritime sector is the keystone in a program of hydrographic monitoring and modernization for the 21st century.

We thank you again for the opportunity to provide testimony at this oversight hearing and would be pleased to answer any questions. Contact: Helen A. Brohl, 973-345-2534, usglsa@cs.com. A list of coalition members is following.

MARITIME NAVIGATION SAFETY COALITION

- Membership -

American Association of Port Authorities
 American Great Lakes Ports Association
 American Institute of Marine Underwriters
 American Maritime Congress
 American Petroleum Institute
 American Pilots Association
 American Waterways Operators
 Aqua Survey, Inc.
 Association of Ship Brokers and Agents
 Boat Owners Association of the United States
 Boston Shipping Association
 C & C Technologies
 Canaveral Port Authority
 Chamber of Shipping of America
 Columbia River Steamship Operators Association
 Connecticut Maritime Association
 Delaware River Port Authority
 Dominion Terminal Associates
 Duluth Seaway Port Authority
 Great Lakes Commission
 Greater Baton Rouge Port Commission
 Greater Houston Port Bureau, Inc.
 Hampton Roads Maritime Association
 INTERTANKO
 International Council of Cruise Lines
 Jacksonville Maritime Association
 Joint Institute for Marine Observations, Scripps Institution of Oceanography
 Lake Carriers Association
 LCMF Incorporated
 Maritime Association of the Port of Charleston
 Maritime Association of the Port of NY/NJ
 Marine Exchange of Southern California
 Marine Exchange of the West Gulf, Inc.
 Maritime Exchange of the Delaware River and Bay
 Maritime Information Service of North America
 Marine Exchange of Puget Sound
 Maryland Port Administration

Massachusetts Port Authority
Matson Navigation Company
Mississippi State Port Authority at Gulfport
National Association of Maritime Organizations
National Industrial Transportation League
National Mining Association
National Ocean Industries Association
National Waterways Conference, Inc.
Passenger Vessel Association
Pilot Association of the Bay and Delaware River
Port of Galveston
Port of Houston Authority
Port Authority of New York & New Jersey
Port of Los Angeles
Port of Richmond
Port of Sacramento
Port of San Francisco
Puget Sound Steamship Operators Association
Savannah Maritime Association
South Carolina State Ports Authority
South Jersey Port Corporation
Steamship Association of Louisiana
Tampa Port Authority
Terra Surveys, LLC
Thales Geosolutions (Pacific)
The Fertilizer Institute
Transportation Institute
United States Great Lakes Shipping Association