

Interagency Working Group on Ocean Partnerships



Strategic Plan

Introduction

[The Interagency Working Group on Ocean Partnerships is] motivated by, and predicated upon, the benefits of partnering on common needs, and sharing the responsibility for those items that might otherwise get left undone but which are needed by all.¹

Federal agencies and the academic oceanographic community have been fortunate to work together in productive partnerships. Their mutually beneficial partnerships are characterized by the federal agencies' funding research at academic institutions that is important to the agencies' missions or is critical to maintaining the health of the... research endeavor.²

These statements reflect only the beginning process of encouraging and establishing partnerships among all sectors, at all levels. Today we should, and must, build partnerships that include participation by the full range of stakeholders, from federal and state agencies to industry, academia, non-governmental organizations, and local citizens. Bringing together all these sectors must be a fundamental goal to succeed in our common pursuit of providing the scientific and technical information on which to base decisions to ensure the wise use of our oceans and coasts and the maintenance of their health.

By fostering an environment of collegiality, opportunities are discovered, created, and realized.

In 2006, the Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology (JSOST) built on the success of the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) and chartered the Interagency Working Group on Ocean Partnerships (IWG-OP). The JSOST, NOPP and the IWG-OP all recognize the benefits of partnering on common research needs and sharing the responsibility for those items that might otherwise be left undone, but which are needed by all. Building relationships is essential to all areas of JSOST concern, and the role of the IWG-OP is to serve as a tool in their development.

The objective of the IWG-OP is to achieve improved efficiency in the planning, programming, and execution of projects resulting from ocean agency partnerships that address topics of mutual and emerging interest. By serving as a forum to discuss, compare, and look beyond the needs of the immediate fiscal year, the IWG-OP will assist in planning for future ocean science and technology, administratively and fiscally.



¹Ten-year strategic plan for the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP), 2004

²Oceanography in the Next Decade, Building New Partnerships, NRC, 1992

Past and Present Meet to Build the Future

The IWG-OP was created to build upon the successes, processes, and lessons learned from its predecessor, the NOPP Interagency Working Group (IWG). Through NOPP, the public and private sectors were brought together to support larger, more comprehensive projects, to promote sharing of resources and to foster community-wide innovative advances in ocean science, technology, and education.

After the establishment of NOPP, in further recognition of the importance of the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes to the United States, the U.S. Congress enacted the Oceans Act of 2000, which created the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. The Commission's comprehensive final report, released in 2004, covered issues that included, among others, resource use and protection, transportation, science, education, and mapping.

To meet the challenges raised by the Commission, President George W. Bush, on December 17, 2004, issued an Executive Order, declaring that it shall be the policy of the United States to:

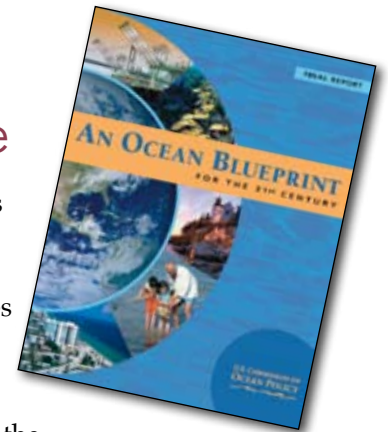
- 1 Coordinate the activities of executive departments and agencies regarding ocean-related matters in an integrated and effective manner to advance the environmental, economic, and security interests of present and future generations of Americans; and
- 2 Facilitate, as appropriate, coordination and consultation regarding ocean-related matters among Federal, State, Tribal, and local governments, the private sector, foreign governments, and international organizations.

Concurrently, the President released the Administration's U.S. Ocean Action Plan (OAP), which provides the foundation to advance the next generation of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes policy. The OAP outlines a framework for ocean governance that includes participation by a full range of stakeholders from federal and state agencies to industry and local citizens, and attempts to bring all concerned parties to the table. The cabinet-level Committee on Ocean Policy spearheads this effort, while the Interagency Committee on Ocean Science and Resource Management Integration (ICOSRMI) and its subcommittees, JSOST and the Subcommittee on Integrated Management of Ocean Resources (SIMOR) provide a working support and advisory system.

This new governance framework merged with the existing framework to move ahead in a cohesive fashion, with the IWG-OP following on the NOPP tradition. While the IWG-OP builds on and takes inspiration from the progress made through the NOPP IWG and the NOPP Strategic Goals, the IWG-OP focuses exclusively on building, enabling and enhancing partnerships. Other JSOST IWGs

NOPP was established by the U.S. Congress (Public Law 104-201) in Fiscal Year 1997 for two general purposes:

- 1 "...to promote the national goals of assuring national security, advancing economic development, protecting quality of life, and strengthening science education and communication through improved knowledge of the ocean; and..."
- 2 "...to coordinate and strengthen oceanographic efforts in support of those goals by:
 - a Identifying and carrying out partnerships among federal agencies, academia, industry, and other members of the oceanographic scientific community in the areas of data, resources, education, and communication, and
 - b reporting annually to Congress on the Program.



have taken on responsibility for progress in the other NOPP Strategic Goal areas. For example, the Interagency Working Group on Ocean Observations is focused on the implementation of IOOS and the Interagency Working Group on Ocean Education is committed to promoting ocean education.

Why Partnering is Important

There are five major reasons why interagency and intersector partnerships are important:

- 1 to address critical national priorities that cannot be accomplished by a single agency or sector;
- 2 to address priority issues that bridge the mandates of individual federal agencies; and
- 3 to contribute to the cutting edge or forefront of interdisciplinary and intersector science and technology;
- 4 to help ensure that institutional resources are invested and leveraged wisely, while planning for the future; and
- 5 to provide the necessary flexibility for supporting new, emerging issues that may not yet be part of a “mandate” but are of interest and value to many.

Working together, partner agencies and sectors may realize benefits through an entire spectrum of possibilities, from the simple cost benefit of leveraging to a broader situational awareness of the national implications of their goals and missions.

Levels of Partnership

Partnership activities encompass a continuum from a more “global,” less formal, sharing of information between sectors to a high level of interaction where common objectives are planned and implemented among the partnering entities.

To ensure that the strengths of each level of partnership are fully employed, the JSOST established the IWG-OP to provide a leadership focus throughout the entire spectrum of partnership activities.

Partnership activities encompass a continuum

- **Coordination** – sharing information on similar projects
- **Cooperation** – working together on parallel projects with common objectives
- **Collaboration** – sharing objectives and working together on common projects

Outcome: Collaboration for Efficiency and Synergy

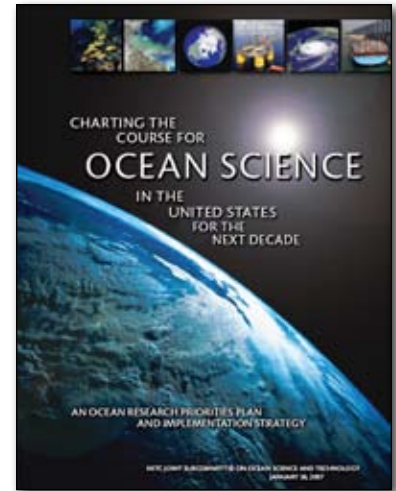
While NOPP was designed to develop and implement partnerships, such collaborations also offer a means to overcome cultural and administrative obstacles. Attention is still needed on some of these challenges. One example is the time lag between research developments in the university environment and their utilization by government agencies in operations conducted for the public good; that is, the transfer of research to operations. Another challenge is presented by the various legal restrictions on public-private partnerships as well as on multiple-agency funding of the collaborative research efforts.

To achieve its objective of improved efficiency in the planning, programming and execution of projects from ocean agency partnerships, the IWG-OP will examine lessons learned from the NOPP IWG. It will serve as a platform from which to better identify collaborative oceanographic ventures and explore and establish cost-sharing opportunities. *The IWG-OP will focus on those objectives felt to be too big for any single*

agency, which cut across multiple missions, or require government-private-academic partnerships for success.

By looking beyond the current fiscal year, the IWG-OP facilitates partnership opportunities and fiscal flexibility to assist in planning and implementation of future ocean science and technology needs. The IWG-OP assists agencies in meeting their long-term strategic goals and, in turn, agencies include partnerships as one of the tools at their disposal.

While the mission of the IWG-OP is to advise and assist JSOST on matters related to ocean partnership efforts, member agencies have already adopted a culture and a vision that encourages those synergistic relationships, which enhance the expansion of our knowledge, our capabilities to observe and predict, and the scientific basis for management.



Scope of the IWG-OP

While special attention will be paid to collaborative efforts advancing the objectives of the OAP, partnerships facilitated through the IWG-OP will address the full range of ocean science, technology and resource management priorities. For this purpose, "oceans" includes coastal regions and the Great Lakes. Of particular significance is the emphasis that the OAP has given to resource management. With the creation of JSOST's sister subcommittee, SIMOR, science and technology-based partnerships for the stewardship of our nation's ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resources will also be addressed. By their very nature, such collaborations will serve to facilitate the transition of research to operations.

Strategic Goals of the IWG-OP

Strategic Goals of the IWG-OP:

- I Continue and expand ocean partnership dialogues;
- II Sponsor ocean partnership activities;
- III Identify and remove obstacles and disincentives to ocean partnerships; and
- IV Facilitate opportunities for dialogue with the nation's leadership

Each of the four Strategic Goals discussed below identify three or more actions as specific targets for which partnerships may be necessary. These actions represent measures of acceptable progress for this Strategic Plan. The challenge for the IWG-OP is to facilitate efforts through interagency and intersector partnerships to execute the listed actions.

This Strategic Plan is intended to provide a basic structure within which the IWG-OP partners can pursue the identified actions, and in particular those identified in *Charting the Course for Ocean Science in the United States for the Next Decade: An Ocean Research Priorities Plan and Implementation Strategy* <http://ocean.ceq.gov/about/docs/orppfinal.pdf> which presents national research priorities as called for in the OAP. New actions may be added, implementation plans prepared, and metrics developed and

tracked as appropriate. This Strategic Plan will be updated periodically as needed, particularly so as to reflect adjustments in the priorities and implementation strategies of *Charting the Course*. Plans to address actions, and any associated metrics, will be documented separately and are intended for annual assessment and update.

Goal I – Continue and expand ocean partnership dialogues

Actions...

- 1 Build on the partnership successes of the National Oceanographic Partnership Program.
- 2 Serve as a point for dialogue on those OAP tasks requiring interagency or intersector partnerships in order to realize success.
- 3 Form or foster partnerships necessary to support *Charting the Course*, in particular its four near-term priorities (see right).
- 4 Working with the other interagency bodies as needed, form long-term strategic partnerships on emerging science and technology needs and opportunities (for example, the issue of anthropogenic sound in the marine environment and the scientific and mapping efforts necessary to address the interagency Extended Continental Shelf initiative).
- 5 Facilitate and participate in forums on ocean research and development priorities.

Four near-term priorities, reflecting efforts to be pursued over the next two to five years, were developed to initiate rapid progress towards the 20 ocean research priorities of *Charting the Course*.

- Forecasting the Response of Coastal Ecosystems to Persistent Forcing and Extreme Events
- Comparative Analysis of Marine Ecosystem Organization
- Sensors for Marine Ecosystems
- Assessing Meridional Overturning Circulation Variability: Implications for Rapid Climate Change

Goal II – Sponsor ocean partnership activities

Actions...

- 1 Invest in critical topics (e.g., Broad Agency Announcements and Requests for Proposals in support of *Charting the Course* and other interagency activities).
- 2 Present awards for Excellence in Partnering to recognize the best examples of projects involving multiple sectors.
- 3 Support forums and reports on emerging ocean topics and develop priorities.

Goal III – Identify and remove obstacles and disincentives to ocean partnerships

Actions...

- 1 Improve partnership flexibility among federal agencies (financial and staffing resources) by:
 - encouraging interagency personnel rotations
 - enabling interagency transfer of resources
 - developing shared interagency objectives for complementary missions
- 2 Develop mechanisms to link federal and non-federal resources especially in the context of regional alliances, consortia and other regional partnerships.
- 3 Raise awareness of obstacles and disincentives external and internal to the federal government.

Goal IV – Facilitate opportunities for dialogue with the nation’s leadership

Actions...

- 1 Achieve recognition as the leading resource on ocean partnership activities.
- 2 Facilitate/host educational forums or updates to members of Congress and their staff on ocean partnership matters, (e.g., *Charting the Course* and its four near-term priorities).
- 3 Sponsor forums on emerging ocean science and technologies for government leaders specifically regarding needs, opportunities, and benefits of multi-agency and multi-sector relationships.
- 4 Report annually to Congress on partnership activities.

In order to ensure wise use of the oceans and the maintenance of their health, individual agencies pursue scientific and technical information on which to base management decisions. Advancement towards appropriate stewardship of the oceans, and associated societal gains, can be more rapidly and efficiently realized through collaborative partnerships. The IWG-OP will continue to focus on ocean research objectives which are too large for single agencies to tackle, but satisfy multiple agency missions and would benefit from partnerships between government, private industry, and academia. It is the intent of the IWG-OP to achieve significant integrative value for the ocean science and resource management missions of the member agencies and partners through timely progress on the goals and actions of this Strategic Plan.



IWG-OP Agencies

Arctic Research Commission
Department of Agriculture
Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Department of Defense
Office of Naval Research
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Department of Energy
Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Food and Drug Administration
National Institutes of Health
Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Coast Guard
Department of Interior
Mineral Management Service
U.S. Geological Survey
Department of Justice
Department of State
Department of Transportation
Maritime Administration
Environmental Protection Agency
Executive Office of the President
Council on Environmental Quality
Domestic Policy Council
Office of Management and Budget
Office of Science and Technology Policy
Joint Chiefs of Staff
Marine Mammal Commission
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
National Science Foundation
Smithsonian Institution



The IWG-OP is supported by the National Oceanographic Partnership Program Office, a program of the Consortium for Ocean Leadership. For more information, visit www.nopp.org.