Mr. Raymond Ban  
Chairman  
Science Advisory Board  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Room 11230  
1315 East-West Highway  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910  

Attn: Dr. Cynthia Decker, Executive Director, NOAA SAB  

Dear Chairman Ban:

On behalf of Ocean Leadership’s 99 member institutions, I am pleased to submit comments on the draft report to the NOAA Science Advisory Board entitled: *In the Nation’s Best Interest: Making the Most of NOAA’s Science Enterprise.*

As an organization representing the ocean research community, we are encouraged with the report recommendation to increase NOAA’s scientific breadth and flexibility by leveraging extramural partnerships with academia, the public, and private sectors. As NOAA is forced to tighten its belt, it is refreshing to know that the agency has taken into consideration that extramural research is a much more efficient and effective way to achieve some of its Research and Development (R&D) priorities. However, R&D funding needs to be protected within the agency, and we encourage NOAA to implement the recommendation of a R&D firewall.

Ocean Leadership views the R&D portfolio as an opportunity to build on existing investments and partnerships between NOAA and the academic research community. Expanding short and long-term investments with extramural academic research partners would better position the agency to accomplish many of the draft report’s highest priority recommendations and help the agency stream-line its efforts to be more flexible fiscally. By doing so, NOAA would be in a better position to achieve its goal of developing strong socioeconomic and integrated ecosystem sciences by limiting the internal duplication of many ongoing external efforts.

Ocean Leadership is concerned that the R&D portfolio overemphasized certain R&D priorities over others. While climate studies and ecosystem sciences were strongly prioritized, NOAA should take care to protect other critical priorities that rely on academic R&D such as mapping and ocean exploration. The academic
community stands by ready to help NOAA continue to provide the crucial R&D that is required to generate timely and accurate geospatial data (i.e. tides, datums, nautical charts, etc.) and contribute to ocean discovery.

Lastly, we recognize the many difficulties that are likely associated with coordinating scientific responses to extreme events and environmental emergencies (i.e. The Deepwater Horizon tragedy) with external partners. NOAA’s response to future environmental catastrophes can be enhanced through more efficient coordination with external partners to leverage the human capacity, infrastructure, and expertise of the academic research community and private sector. A well-coordinated response from all parties is essential during times of need, and will only be realized if NOAA’s relationship with external partners is nurtured throughout long-term collaborations.

The Consortium for Ocean Leadership and its member institutions wish to reiterate our strong support for the recommendations put forth by the Portfolio Research Task Force and our willingness to ensure that NOAA achieve many of its R&D goals.

We thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Robert B. Gagosian
President and CEO
Consortium for Ocean Leadership