Dear Dr. Spinrad:

The Consortium for Ocean Leadership (COL), which represents our nation’s leading ocean science, research, and technology organizations from academia, industry, and the larger nonprofit sector (to include philanthropy, associations, and aquariums), appreciates the opportunity to provide input to help NOAA advance the goals and recommendations outlined in the report *Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful* (“the Report”).

Authorities and related measures exist to ensure NOAA accomplishes the eight core principles and six focus areas outlined in the Report. COL previously highlighted the need for more robust ocean observation and monitoring to realize fisheries and conservation goals related to Section 216(c) of the *Executive Order on Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*. We echo that need in answering this question, as ocean observations underpin almost all ocean scientific research, and expanding our observing infrastructure will both help us better understand the ocean, how it is changing, and more effectively conserve key areas as part of the 30x30 initiative. This information will be necessary to achieve Principle 7 (*Use Science as a Guide*), identified in the Report.

Existing authorities and associated measures are appropriate to help us understand our ocean enough to effectively make both conservation decisions and address threats identified in the Report (e.g., climate change) and should be applied to advance the goals and recommendations of the Report. These include, but are not limited to:

*Coordinated Ocean Observations and Research Act of 2020 (PL 116-271)*: Provisions of the 2020 reauthorization of the *Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observing System (ICOOS) Act of 2009* will help grow our observing enterprise to be able to best answer conservation and management questions, including by increasing the authorization of appropriations; expanding responsibilities for the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) Program Office to work with Regional Associations and users to develop products for decisionmakers; and reporting to Congress on gaps in observing infrastructure, an economic vulnerability report, a monitoring prioritization plan, and a strategic research plan. Relatedly, ongoing work of Interagency Ocean Observation Committee, which includes task teams looking at the ocean-climate nexus, as well as work by the IOOS Coastal Climate Working Group on detecting the coastal climate signal, would be relevant to the Report’s goals.

*Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (PL 117-58)*: Supplementary funding provided in this recently passed legislation will allow us to significantly grow, as well as recapitalize and modernize, our ocean and coastal observing systems. Specifically, the goals of the Report require increased capacity and coverage for long-term monitoring of marine biodiversity and biological populations underpinning conservation efforts.
**National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP) (PL 116-283):** The revitalized NOPP, which was reauthorized as part of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2021, provides a large return on investment of federal dollars. A more robust and reimagined NOPP could include programs related to these efforts—with both federal and nonfederal partners—including but not limited to understanding threats and solutions for our coastal ocean, ocean exploration, ocean observing, and coastal resilience. By its very nature, NOPP could also play a key role in enabling interagency partnerships to identify existing or potential new conserved or restored areas to advance the Report’s goals and recommendations and could serve as a mechanism to bring in new private and state partnerships to better understand and support the needs of vulnerable communities and how access to nature could be improved.

1. **National Ocean Mapping, Exploration, and Characterization (NOMEC) Council Activities:** NOMEC initiatives, including the Implementation Plan for the National Strategy for Ocean Mapping, Exploring, and Characterizing the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), which seeks to map deep waters (greater than 40 meters) of our nation’s EEZ by 2030 and coastal waters (shallower than 40 meters) by 2040, will dramatically improve our understanding of the ocean. Fully exploring and characterizing our U.S. EEZ will also help properly identify and manage areas designated for conservation. NOMEC efforts should be integrated with the Report initiatives; analyzing and sharing information collected and/or released as part of the Implementation Plan (e.g., a forthcoming prioritization report from the Interagency Working Group on Ocean Exploration and Characterization) would help ensure the best information possible for successful decision making and management of fisheries and protected resources. Additionally, activities related to the Implementation Plan—including a recent workshop engaging new and nontraditional partners—have been important to broaden stakeholder engagement, so appropriate coordination would help ensure this broad stakeholder participation in the America the Beautiful initiative.

**Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009 – Ocean Exploration (PL 111-11):** Ocean exploration activities authorized in this legislation, as well as language included in congressional reauthorizations (e.g., National Ocean Exploration Act (S.381)) will grow our ability to map, explore, and characterize our ocean and should be better utilized to advance the Report’s goals and recommendations.

**White House Memorandum on Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) and Federal Decision Making:** The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and Council on Environmental Quality released a memorandum recognizing ITEK “as one of the many important bodies of knowledge that contributes to the scientific, technical, social, and economic advancements of the United States and to our collective understanding of the natural world.” This formal recognition is an important step to ensuring Indigenous voices are included in the decision-making process and should be an integral part of 30x30 decision making.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide input into this process. COL and our members would be happy to answer questions, provide additional information, or discuss any of these concepts further.

Respectfully,

Kristen Yarincik  
Vice President and Director, Research and Education  
Consortium for Ocean Leadership
Consortium for Ocean Leadership Members

Alaska Ocean Observing System • Alaska SeaLife Center • Arctic Research Consortium of the United States (ARCUS) • ASV Global, LLC • Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences • Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences • Chevron USA • College of William & Mary (VIMS) • Columbia University (LDEO) • Consumer Energy Alliance (CEA) • Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences (CIRES) • Dauphin Island Sea Lab • Duke University • Earth2Ocean • East Carolina University • Esri • Exocetus Autonomous Systems • FAU Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute • Florida Institute of Oceanography • Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation • Harte Research Institute • Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute • IEEE Oceanic Engineering Society • Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES) • IOOS Association • JASCO Applied Sciences • Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (JHUAPL) • L-3 MariPro, Inc. • Liquid Robotics, Inc. • Louisiana State University • MARACOOS • Marine Technology Society (MTS) • Massachusetts Institute of Technology • Monmouth University Urban Coast Institute • Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute • Mystic Aquarium • National Ocean Industries Association (NOIA) • NERACOOS • New England Aquarium • North Carolina State University • North Pacific Research Board • Nova Southeastern University • Ocean Aero, Inc. • Old Dominion University • Oregon State University • Pennsylvania State University • Rutgers University • Saildrone • Savannah State University • Schmidt Ocean Institute • Sea-Bird Scientific • Severn Marine Technologies, LLC • Shell Exploration and Production Company • Skidaway Institute of Oceanography of the University of Georgia • Sonardyne, Inc. • South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium • Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) • Stanford University • Stony Brook University • Texas A&M University • ThayerMahan • U.S. Arctic Research Commission • U.S. Naval Postgraduate School • University of Alaska Fairbanks • University of California, Davis • University of California, San Diego (Scripps) • University of California, Santa Barbara • University of California, Santa Cruz • University of Delaware • University of Florida • University of Hawaii • University of Maine • University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science • University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth • University of Miami • University of New Hampshire • University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill • University of North Carolina, Wilmington • University of Rhode Island • University of South Florida • University of Southern Mississippi • University of Texas at Austin • University of Washington • University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee School of Freshwater Sciences • Vulcan, Inc. • Woods Hole Oceanographic