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U.S. Integrated Ocean Observing System Advisory Committee

December 8, 2021

The Honorable Richard W. Spinrad, PhD
Undersecretary of Commerce
for Oceans and Atmosphere and
NOAA Administrator
1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Spinrad:

The Federal Advisory Committee (FAC) for the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) strongly recommends infrastructure funding for IOOS be included in NOAA's spend plan for ocean observing system sections within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (PL 117-XX). At a minimum, this funding should be consistent with the amounts established through the regional associations who have conducted thorough analyses that assessed their requirements to refresh their infrastructure. The association's spend plan was developed as part of the inventory conducted by the IOOS Program Office of regional requirements based on the five-year cooperative agreements recently approved by NOAA. It would recapitalize and modernize the system, including new technologies to address sustained coastal climate observations, biology and other needs at a cost of \$136 million over the five years.

The IOOS inventory not only includes specific infrastructure needs but also their impacts to society, including increasing safety of maritime operations and development of offshore wind energy, ensuring ecological and human health, and supporting local and regional economies. These projects are "shovel ready" and the cooperative agreements provide a mechanism for quick, successful implementation.

The Infrastructure bill provides a unique opportunity for NOAA to ensure the continued operations of the IOOS regional network that has been providing data and information for stakeholders for over 20 years. Securing the continued longevity of this network will provide meaningful information for assessing climate change, contribute to the new blue economy, and, as a national effort, support equitable access to coastal ocean information. Specifically, refreshing and upgrading the infrastructure is needed to provide long-term baseline data critically needed to monitor and assess the impacts of coastal climate change. IOOS operates at the nexus between the land and ocean, and data from a modernized system in these coastal regions are fundamental to the new blue economy. And importantly, coastal observations are vital to providing diverse and often underserved communities the information they need to prepare, adapt and respond to climate change.

There is a substantial and growing requirement for sustained observations and information products, for both coastal communities and all parts of society dependent on coastal regions and resources. However, the IOOS system is aging, impacting both the reliability and coverage of the system as parts fail, downtime increases, and gaps emerge. Support from the infrastructure bill would support the need to modernize and refresh this critical observing system.

We realize there are many deserving needs for the investment in ocean, coastal and Great Lake observing systems. The IOOS regional network, with its regional-scaled observations and information products, is a critical piece of NOAA's ability to provide equitable climate services, serve as an operational backbone for the NOAA and boost new economic opportunities through ocean data. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act represents the single most important opportunity for IOOS to stabilize, modernize, and enhance the national network of regional coastal observing systems to deliver the data and information necessary for delivering robust, equitable climate services and accelerating the new blue economy. We encourage you to seize this opportunity.

Finally, we laud and endorse the efforts the IOOS program office has made in building the Consolidated Unfunded Requirements List (CURL). This was in response to a previous recommendation of the IOOS FAC and we endorse this rigorous approach for all of NOAA's ocean observing assets. We request to see similar analysis from other non-IOOS ocean observing systems to ensure they are aligned appropriately and meet NOAA's ocean data needs.

Thank you for your leadership and your support of US IOOS.

Sincerely,



Scott Rayder, Chair

IOOS Federal Advisory Committee