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23 October 2006

VADM Conrad C. Lautenbacher
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Room 6811
14th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, NC 20230

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Dear VADM Lautenbacher:

On behalf of the NOAA Science Advisory Board, I am pleased to forward the final version of the Report of the External Ecosystem Research Review Team (aka the eERRT). The Board formally accepted the report with minor modifications and revisions at the July 2006 SAB meeting in California. These have now been made to the acceptance of Board. Overall the Board was highly supportive of the findings and recommendations of the Report and encourages NOAA management to endorse, embrace, and effect the changes that will make NOAA the national leader in environmental ecosystem management.

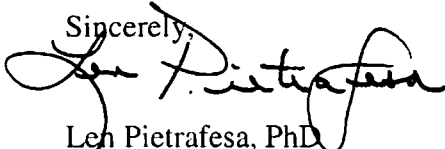
The eERRT Report describes a conceptual framework to serve as an integrating architecture in support of agency ecosystem program planning and ultimately to useful product development. Central to this framework is a comprehensive, horizontally and vertically integrated view of the ecological and human elements of ecosystems. The interaction of these elements constitutes the driving force behind the continued mismanagement of our nation's coastal systems. It also defines the risks of mismanagement and the information needed to manage those risks. Equally important, the framework addresses the necessary connections within and among systems and scales. An emphasis on the needs of planners, managers and decision-makers in a changing physical and social environment, and the necessity of an iterative, nested, collaborative, and participatory process are also essential elements of this integrated approach.

Given the above, the Board is very concerned that the interactive connectivity of the physical, biological and social systems in the coastal zones of the nation is neither well understood nor even recognized at regional to state to county to municipality levels. As such, leadership by an honest broker is required and NOAA is viewed by the SAB as having that capacity and potential. The Nation's coastal managers must understand that they are short term stewards of our coastal systems with long-term responsibilities to manage the impacts of human growth and human alterations in a manner that ensures the sustained ecosystem health of precious coastal resources. If there is one area that the Board feels that more research is required it is in the area of the end to end assessment of creating sustainable coastal ecosystems; in which humans are a component, as are

wildlife, birds, fish, mammals, and plants. Here, the social sciences must be engaged in a significant way if the research is to be comprehensive. Additionally, the role of NOAA's future outreach and education to the stakeholders cannot be underestimated.

The challenge is great but NOAA must meet the challenge if our nation's coastal systems are to be managed sustainably, protected where needed, restored where necessary, and preserved at all costs. NOAA is the natural leader of this critical investment in our nation's coastal future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Len Pietrafesa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Len" and the last name "Pietrafesa" clearly legible.

Len Pietrafesa, PhD
Chair, NOAA SAB

Cc: J. Kelly
W. Hogarth
D. Fluharty
C. Decker