

Terms of Reference for the Science Advisory Board,
NOAA Ocean Exploration Program Advisory Working Group (OEAWG)

NOAA Ocean Exploration (OE) Program

Program Vision – To increase knowledge of the Earth’s ocean, broadly defined, and in response to growing national concerns about present and changing conditions, the OE program explores the still largely unknown physical, chemical, biological environments and the nation’s submerged maritime history in the ocean and Great Lakes. OE communicates and provides public access to the results of its explorations.

Program Background – The OE program (<http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov>) represents NOAA’s response to the 2000 *Report of the President’s Panel on Ocean Exploration*. Released in 2004, the *US Commission on Ocean Policy* then expanded the scope of Ocean Exploration program to include additional emphasis on international aspects. Now in its fifth year, the program is characterized by broad hypothesis-driven, interdisciplinary projects and expeditions conducted using state-of-the-art technologies. These projects and expeditions are funded primarily through a peer-review based national grants program as well as through interagency collaborations. The program explores the ocean in all spatial dimensions (latitudinal, longitudinal, and depth) as well as the time domain. The OE program maintains a strong commitment to education and outreach, and it is also committed to timely and innovative dissemination of data and results through an integrated products team of representatives from several NOAA program offices. The program budget in FY 2005 is approximately \$23 million. OE is in the process of refitting a T-AGOS vessel that will be dedicated to the program in mid- to late- 2007.

Program Goals – NOAA’s mission includes investigation of the oceans for the purpose of discovery and the advancement of knowledge. The OE program is a component of the Ecosystem Research Program of the NOAA Ecosystem Mission Goal. The goals of the OE program are, (1) to explore, map, and characterize physical, chemical, biological ocean environments, especially within the context of the health and function of ocean and Great Lakes ecosystems, (2) to develop a better understanding of ocean dynamics and interactions in new places and/or new levels, (3) to develop new ocean sensors and systems, (4) to explore the submerged cultural history, and (5) disseminate information to the public through formal and informal education and outreach programs. Accomplishment of these goals will result in important, and likely critical, new ocean knowledge and will help enable NOAA to respond to emerging ocean-related issues and missions. The results of ocean exploration and discoveries will lead to subsequent systematic research, monitoring, and development of management strategies.

Purpose of the OEAWG

The OE Advisory Working Group (OEAWG) will be a standing subcommittee of the NOAA Science Advisory Board (SAB). Its primary purpose will be to provide NOAA,

through the SAB, with timely and expert guidance and oversight pertaining to, (1) general priorities for ocean exploration, including geographic areas of interest as well as subject matter topics, and (2) advice concerning emerging ocean exploration-relevant technologies. Another critical function will be to organize and conduct periodic reviews of: the quality of the program's exploration and research; the relevance of program activities and goals to NOAA's Ecosystem Mission Goal and the Program Planning, Budget, and Execution System; and the performance of the program in meeting its research objectives and long-term goals described in its Annual Operating Plan and other relevant NOAA plans and policies. The foregoing guidance and oversight of the program's mission and implementation will be consistent with the NOAA Strategic Plan.

Initially, the OEAWG will meet twice a year (the number of meetings per year is established at the discretion of the Assistant Administrator for Oceanic and Atmospheric Research in consultation with the OE Director). Every three years, the OEAWG will organize and conduct a peer review of the program for the purpose of assessing program accomplishments and providing guidance and perspective for the program's future. An initial task for the OEAWG will be to provide a perspective on priority ocean exploration topics and geographic areas of interest to help establish an initial schedule of operations for the new OE ship.

OEAWG Members

The OEAWG will consist of approximately nine individuals from academia, government, industry, and other ocean-related institutions. Members will be selected by the Chair of the SAB in consultation with the members of the SAB, the Director of the Ocean Exploration Program, and the Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere.

Qualifications - Individuals will have national and international reputations. They will have degrees or professional qualifications in: physical, chemical, or biological oceanography, social sciences, or ocean engineering, technology, and/or operations. They will be familiar with NOAA's organization and Strategic Plan. They will have scientific credentials and/or relevant experience that will enable them to provide expert advice concerning OE's roles within the context of NOAA's ocean missions and policies.

Length of Terms - Members will be appointed for three-year terms, renewable once, and serve at the discretion of the NOAA Science Advisory Board chair. Initial appointments will include one-third each four- and five-year terms. Vacancy appointments shall be for the remainder of the unexpired term of the vacancy, and shall be renewable twice if the unexpired term is less than one year.