

Charter of the Science Advisory Panel to the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

Official Name: This Panel officially will be designated as the Science Advisory Panel (hereinafter the Panel) to the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.

Background: The Commission was tasked by the Oceans Act of 2000 (Public Law 106-256) to submit within 18 months after its establishment a final report to Congress and the President that includes its findings and recommendations regarding a coordinated and comprehensive national ocean policy for the United States. The Act also mandates that the Commission, “in consultation with the Ocean Studies Board of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences, shall establish a multidisciplinary science advisory panel of experts in the sciences of living and non-living marine resources to assist the Commission in preparing its report, including ensuring that the scientific information considered by the Commission is based on the best scientific information available.”

Membership and Function: The Panel will be composed of a suitable number of members to ensure that pertinent elements of ocean and coastal science are covered. Members will be appointed by the Chair of the Commission to serve for a period not to exceed the statutory term of the Commission. The Panel will be composed of four sub-panels, each consisting of 4-6 members, for the four Commission working groups: 1) Research, Education and Marine Operations; 2) Stewardship; 3) Governance; and 4) Investment and Development. Panel members will be selected and subsequently assigned to a sub-panel based on their expertise in the statutorily required subject matter that the Commission will be addressing through the respective work groups as well as in plenary session. In addition to the Panel members, the Commission may enlist the expertise of others (hereinafter referred to as special task advisors) as needed to assist it with highly specific topics and issues and to assist in the draft review process for the Commission’s report to Congress and to the President. The contributions of these special task advisors will be acknowledged, along with those of Panel members, in the Commission’s report. Because the Oceans Act authorizes the Commission, “to secure directly from any Federal agency or department any information it deems necessary to carry out its functions under this Act....,” Federal employees will not be asked to serve either on the Panel or as special task advisors since their input can be obtained independently pursuant to the above-cited authority.

The Panel will be under the direction of, and report to, the Chair of the Commission. However, sub-panel members are expected to be responsive to the requests for direct assistance from the chairs of the respective working groups. All Panel and sub-panel taskings, however, must be pre-approved by the Chair of the Commission to ensure that Commission priorities are satisfied. Examples of scientific assistance the Panel will provide to the Commission through the Chair and working group chairs are:

1. review materials submitted for Commission consideration—e.g., data, documents, reports—to help ensure, “that the scientific information considered by the Commission is based on the best scientific information available.”
2. help ensure that the Commission meets its mandated charge to, “give equal consideration to environmental, technical feasibility, economic and scientific factors;” and

3. provide advice, guidance and scientific information as requested by the Commission, or on their own initiative, “to assist the Commission in preparing its report.”

Panel members and special task advisors may be asked on occasion to attend Commission or other meetings. Under these circumstances, they will be reimbursed for actual travel expenditures as allowed by Federal law and regulations, but will not be reimbursed for their time.