

June 28, 2002

Admiral Watkins,

I am responding to the three questions expressed in your letter of 30 May.
Thank you for your continued interest.

Cordially,

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1. The role of the Federal Government in managing and fostering new marine drug discovery should be on the side of fostering, not regulating. There is no need for the Federal Government to manage this process, as there are experts already poised to increase our investments in research in this area. The scientific community is well-versed in conservation issues and does a great job at self-regulation. In addition, most states have adequate laws and restrictions in place to insure that special zones and area of high biological significance are not affected in collection programs. The main issue is to provide for a larger emphasis on cross-disciplinary support programs and this means research programs that are generally collaborative between different agencies (NSF and NIEHS for example).
 2. No, the Government should not regulate any form of marine drug discovery. For the reasons above, this would create significant bureaucratic impediments to success. Rules and oversight already exists at the state level to insure that uncontrolled harvesting and over collecting do not occur.
 3. I'm not sure what is meant by new technologies in this question. State governments, at least in California, have significant oversight of these activities. To collect, permits are required and permit applications receive significant review. Fish and Game (and others) are required to be contacted when collections occur. Often these officials oversee the collections. What can be said is that a uniform oversight of collecting activities should be established for all the states. But, please keep in mind that the goal should be to assist in scientific research, not to throw impediments in path of scholarly advancement. Unfortunately, some of the enforcement activities in certain states, the Florida Keys for example, are by officers who do not see scientific advancement as a benefit.