

Captain Bob Pawlowski
Alaska Program Manager
Thales GeoSolutions (Pacific), Inc.
Bob.Pawlowski@thales-geosolutions.com

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Ocean Commission. I am Captain Bob Pawlowski, NOAA (Ret) and a member of the Nautical Institute. I also am the Alaska Program Manager for Thales GeoSolutions (Pacific), Inc., the primary NOAA contractor for nautical charting surveys to address the survey backlog in Alaska.

I would like to make 3 points for the Ocean Commission to consider.

First, in conducting surveys in Alaska in support of safe navigation and coastal engineering, as well as in defining fishery habitat, it is important to recognize the lack of coastal data infrastructure throughout Alaska. Alaska has 60% of the nation's charting backlog, lacks accurate tidal datums for determining the coast line. Together, this lack of data directly impacts port and harbor development, determination of federal/state/private jurisdiction, and creates complications in the environmental permitting process. Supporting a strong program in the mapping of Alaska's coastal zone and EEZ is essential to safe sustainable development in Alaska.

Second, Thales GeoSolutions (Pacific), Inc. is a world leader in the application of multibeam echosounder technology to seabed mapping. Advances in beam to beam backscatter measurements are enable very detailed maps of fishery habitats in Alaska, including the Fairweather grounds and Pamplona Spur off Yakutat, the rockfish habitats off Cape Ommaney, and the offshore glacial banks southeast of Kodiak. These surveys are being completed to support efforts in determining essential fish habitats. In addition to providing depth information, these data allow the scientists to define differing bottom types and quantify slope areas known to support certain types of fish. Basically it gives fishery scientists modern, high-density data to visualize the seabed and accurately quantify and analyze available habitat. This is a sound first step in analyzing our fishery habitats, both in Alaska and nationwide. Throughout the hearings, the point that making good science based decisions is essential to sustainable fisheries has been mentioned over and over. I encourage the Ocean Commission to recognize the importance of existing technologies, like multi-beam mapping, in supporting science based decision making for programs, like EFH.

Third, Alaska's coastal communities are in crisis with declines in revenues associated with fisheries and increasing pressure to address environmental questions associated with changes in the Bering Sea and gulf of Alaska species, I encourage the Ocean Commission to support education and training programs that enable our residents to meet research data collection needs in their remote locations. The people of these communities understand their coastal zone, are competent in working on the water, and are committed to a healthy sustainable life style. And they are in need of work that is related to their fishing background. As a NOAA Corps officer, I found a career in ocean sciences. As an Alaskan resident and Alaskan mariner, I see an increasing need for data collection in our coastal zone to support programs of NOAA, EPA, and USF&WS, as well as Alaska DEC and DNR. Through a national policy, we can build programs that employ our local people in using their local knowledge to support data collection for science-based decisions.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.