

CHAPTER 7:

STRENGTHENING THE FEDERAL AGENCY STRUCTURE

Although improved coordination is a vital aspect of the new National Ocean Policy Framework, changes to the structure of some federal agencies will also be needed to enable effective implementation of national ocean policy. Strengthening the federal agency structure through a phased approach—in combination with improving coordination through the National Ocean Council—will improve agency performance, reduce unnecessary overlap, and significantly enhance the long-term goal of addressing the nation’s management of oceans, coasts, and other natural resources through an ecosystem-based management approach.

Immediate strengthening of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) ability to carry out its many ocean- and coastal-related responsibilities is critical. That is to be followed by strengthening of other agencies with ocean-related responsibilities, and consolidation, where appropriate, of ocean and coastal programs in all agencies. Over the long term, more fundamental changes to the federal agency structure should be made to recognize the inextricable connections among the sea, the land, the atmosphere and all living creatures on Earth, including humans.

REORGANIZING TO SUPPORT AN ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT APPROACH

New knowledge about the functioning of ecosystems—and specifically about our ocean and coastal regions—supports the need for fundamental changes in the nation’s approach to managing its resources. The benefits of improved coordination at national and regional levels were discussed in Chapters 4 through 6, and a number of recommendations made. But even excellent coordination does not preclude the need to consider reorganization. The new National Ocean Policy Framework contemplates both. The proliferation of federal agencies with some responsibility for ocean and coastal activities (illustrated in Figure 4.1) strongly suggests that consolidation might improve government performance, reduce unnecessary overlaps, facilitate local, state, and regional interactions with the federal government, and begin to move the nation toward a more ecosystem-based management approach.

REVIEWING PREVIOUS REORGANIZATION PROPOSALS

In 1969, the Stratton Commission called for the establishment of a major new independent agency to administer the nation’s civil marine and atmospheric programs.¹ Around the same time, the President’s Advisory Council on Executive Reorganization (known as the Ash Council) made recommendations for more effective management of all federal programs and agencies.

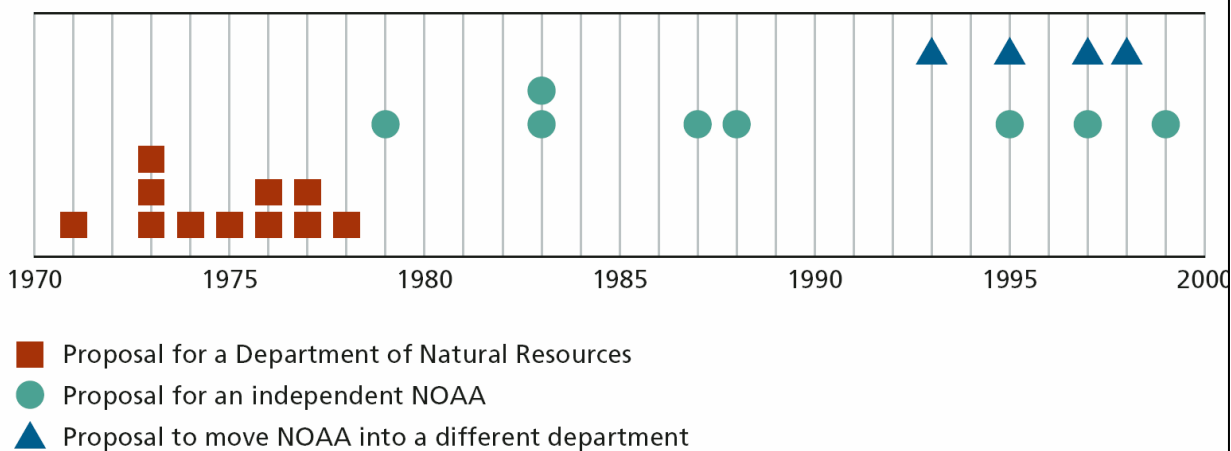
Based on the advice from these two groups, the Nixon administration planned to create an ocean and atmospheric agency and place it in a new Department of Natural Resources, in which the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and several other agencies were identified as key elements. However, in

1970 the administration decided, largely for political reasons, to establish the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as an agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC).

Since that time, members of Congress have introduced many reorganization proposals to improve federal management generally or specifically as it affects oceans and coasts. Two presidential proposals addressed broad reorganization around natural resources, while a national advisory committee on oceans and coasts proposed specific recommendations to improve the federal agency structure in that area. Proposals in the 1970s called for putting NOAA within a broader Department of Natural Resources, while a mix of proposals during the 1980s and 1990s would have either established an independent NOAA or moved parts of the agency to a different department. In the end, largely because of the political complexity associated with any reorganization of executive branch agencies, none of the proposals to reorganize or relocate NOAA was adopted. (Brief summaries of past proposals are included at the end of this chapter and summarized in Figure 7.1.)

Despite past failures to reorganize ocean and coastal programs, the concept of combining federal programs with similar functions remains under active consideration. In its 2003 report, the National Commission on the Public Service (known as the Volcker Commission) concluded that the historical phenomenon of governmental expansion on an issue-by-issue basis has resulted in a “virtually unmanageable tangle of government activities” that negatively affects program performance. That commission emphasized the need to reorganize the federal government “into a limited number of mission-related executive departments.”²²

Figure 7.1 Proposals to Reorganize Federal Ocean Management



Since 1970, there have been many congressional, presidential, and federal advisory committee proposals to consolidate the management of natural resources, including oceans, within the federal government (Table 7.1). Most recently, proposals have focused on establishing NOAA as an independent agency, or moving it out of the Department of Commerce to a more compatible home.

The complexity of the current policy-making process, with its many political and jurisdictional components, compels a cautious, methodical, phased approach for moving toward a more ecosystem-based federal structure. The phases include:

1. *Phase I—Immediate Action:* Solidify NOAA’s role as the nation’s lead civilian ocean agency through the enactment of a NOAA organic act that codifies the agency’s establishment within the Department of Commerce, clarifies its mission, and strengthens execution of its functions.
2. *Phase II—Medium-term Action:* Strengthen other agencies with ocean-related responsibilities and consolidate selected ocean and coastal functions and programs where such consolidation would eliminate unnecessary duplication, achieve more effective policy implementation, and not undermine the central mission of any agency.
3. *Phase III—Long-term Action:* Include oceans and coasts within a unified federal agency structure to manage all natural resources according to an ecosystem-based management approach.

STRENGTHENING NOAA: PHASE I

NOAA’s mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth’s environment and to conserve and manage ocean and coastal resources to meet the nation’s economic, social, and environmental needs. The agency’s responsibilities have been spread across five line offices: the National Ocean Service; the National Marine Fisheries Service; the National Weather Service; the National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service; and the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research.

Since its creation, NOAA has made significant strides in weather prediction, navigational charting, marine operations and services on the ocean and along the coast, management and protection of living marine resources, satellite operations, processing and distribution of data, and development of innovative technologies and observing systems. These successes have occurred despite significant programmatic and functional overlaps, and frequent disagreements and disconnects among the current line offices. Recently, a sixth line office, the Office of Program Planning and Integration, was established to improve horizontal integration among NOAA line offices. Although this change will require time to take hold and show results, such initiatives constitute one of many steps required to strengthen NOAA’s performance.

NOAA needs both to manage its current activities more effectively and, if some or all of the recommendations discussed in this report are implemented, to handle a number of new responsibilities. For example, Chapter 26 discusses significant improvements that will be needed at NOAA to enable its effective implementation of the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), including streamlined distribution of funds to other involved agencies, closer partnerships with industry and academia, and the ability to assume operational responsibilities for satellite Earth observing programs. A stronger, more effective, science-based and service-oriented ocean agency—one that contributes to better management of oceans and coasts through an ecosystem-based approach—is needed.

NOAA’s three primary functions can be categorized as follows: 1) assessment, prediction, and operations for ocean, coastal, and atmospheric environments; 2) marine resource and area management; and 3) scientific research and education. One of the critical objectives for a strengthened NOAA is improved interaction within and among these categories such that NOAA’s functions complement and support each other. For example, resource management decisions should be based on the best available science, research efforts should be planned to support the agency’s management missions, and all research—sea, land, and air—should be connected and coordinated. Changes of this nature will likely require adjustments to the internal operation of the agency, including possible additional changes to the current line office structure.

Box 7.1 Improving Ocean and Coastal Management by Enhancing NOAA's Capacity

NOAA is currently responsible for a variety of ocean and coastal activities and this report contains many recommendations intended to increase the agency's responsibilities and strengthen its performance in the following areas:

- Ocean exploration.
- Implementation of the Integrated Ocean Observing System.
- Scientific planning and budgeting.
- Research support in a broad range of areas, including socioeconomics, oceans and human health, and monitoring.
- Infrastructure and technology development, including the transition from research to operations.
- Mapping and charting.
- Data and information management and communication.
- Formal and informal education for all ages.
- Domestic and international fishery management.
- Marine mammal and other marine species protection.
- Coral reef conservation.
- Sustainable aquaculture.
- Coastal and watershed management.
- Natural hazards planning and response.
- Habitat conservation and restoration.
- Coastal sediment management.
- Water pollution and water quality monitoring.
- Invasive species control.

Recommendation 7–1. Congress should establish an organic act for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) that codifies its existence and mission. The act should ensure that NOAA's structure is consistent with the principles of ecosystem-based management and with its primary functions of assessment, prediction, and operations; management; and research and education.

Specifically, NOAA's structure should support its role in:

- *assessment, prediction, and operations for ocean, coastal, and atmospheric environments, including mapping and charting, satellite-based and in situ data collection, implementation of the Integrated Ocean Observing System, broadly based data information systems, and weather services and products.*
- *management of ocean and coastal areas and living and nonliving marine resources, including fisheries, ocean and coastal areas, vulnerable species and habitats, and protection from pollution and invasive species.*
- *research and education on all aspects of marine resources, including a focus on the importance of research and development, the use of scientifically valid technical data throughout the agency, and with external partners and promotion of educational activities across the agency and with the public.*

NOAA's entire structure, leadership, and staff should be oriented to support the effective exercise of these functions. Beginning with a strengthened science program and a more service-oriented approach, NOAA should be organized not only to improve its efficiency, but also to promote inclusiveness and a commitment to meaningful partnerships with other agencies, states, the private sector, and the academic community. Where partnerships are strong, each institution benefits from the strengths of the others and

the tendency to duplicate similar expertise and functions is minimized. International responsibilities will also need visibility at the highest levels of the agency.

As the clear lead civilian ocean agency in the federal government, NOAA will require budget support commensurate with its important and varied responsibilities. NOAA's placement within DOC may be partly responsible for insufficient visibility, but it has definite budgetary implications. At this time, NOAA's budget is reviewed within the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB's) General Government Programs, along with other elements of DOC, such as the Bureaus of Industry and Security, Economics and Statistics, and Economic Analysis, the Census Bureau, the International Trade Administration, and the Patent and Trademark Office. These programs all have fundamental characteristics and missions programmatically separate from NOAA's, requiring budget examiners with very different expertise and perspectives. NOAA's placement within OMB also precludes its ocean and atmospheric programs from being considered in an ecosystem-based context along with the other resource and science programs in the federal government.

Recommendation 7-2. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB), at the instruction of the President, should review the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration budget within OMB's Natural Resources Programs, along with the budgets of the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Energy, and the Interior, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the National Science Foundation, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Directorate of Civil Works.

CONSOLIDATING OCEAN AND COASTAL PROGRAMS: PHASE II

In addition to NOAA, many other agencies across the federal government administer ocean- and coastal-related programs. In fact, although NOAA encompasses the single largest aggregation of civilian ocean programs, other agencies, taken together, represent the majority of federal spending on ocean, coastal, and atmospheric issues. Thus, changes within NOAA address only one part of the federal agency structure for oceans and coasts. Other agencies with ocean-related activities must be strengthened in a similar manner.

Recommendations throughout this report are intended to strengthen the execution of programs in other federal agencies with ocean- and coastal-related responsibilities, including the U.S. Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, the Interior, Labor, State, and Transportation, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the National Science Foundation (NSF). The goal of moving toward an ecosystem-based management approach requires that all agencies consider how the central functions of: assessment, prediction, and operations; resource management; and scientific research and education fit within their missions. The structure and coordination of these primary functions within each agency should assure they are complementary and support each other.

Departments and agencies often support very similar or overlapping activities. In some cases, this programmatic overlap can provide useful checks and balances when agencies bring different perspectives and experiences to the table. Furthermore, some entities, such as the U.S. Navy, the U.S. Department of Justice, or the National Science Foundation, have such distinct missions that their ocean- and coastal-related components could not be simply removed and transferred without harm to the overall enterprise. Programs that are not suitable for consolidation will need to be coordinated through the National Ocean Council and the regional ocean councils.

Box 7.2 Federal Ocean and Coastal Activities in Agencies other than NOAA

The U.S. Department of the Interior's (DOI's) mission is to protect the nation's treasures for future generations, provide access to the nation's natural and cultural heritage, provide wise stewardship of energy and mineral resources, foster sound use of land and water resources, and conserve and protect fish and wildlife. Several agencies within DOI have ocean and coastal functions, including the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the National Park Service (NPS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Minerals Management Service (MMS). USGS provides scientific information to describe and understand the Earth, minimize loss of life and property from natural disasters, and manage water, biological, energy, and mineral resources. The goal of NPS is to conserve the scenery, the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of these resources in a manner that will leave them unimpaired for future generations. Many units within the National Park System are located in coastal areas. The USFWS mission is to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. MMS assesses the nature, extent, recoverability, and value of leasable minerals on the outer Continental Shelf. It oversees the development and efficient recovery of mineral resources and promotes the use of safe offshore operational technologies.

The mission of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to protect human health and to safeguard the natural environment—air, water, and land—upon which life depends. Within EPA, the Office of Water includes the Office of Wetlands, Oceans, and Watersheds, which addresses wetlands protection, protection of ocean and coastal environments including watersheds and estuaries, management of dredged material, and water quality monitoring.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Earth Science Enterprise studies the Earth from space through environmental research programs and observing systems to meet the needs of the nation's scientific communities.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Directorate of Civil Works, located in the U.S. Department of Defense, administers flood control and shore protection programs, environmental restoration programs, and the regulation of U.S. waters and wetlands.

The U.S. Coast Guard, a multi-mission agency recently transferred from the U.S. Department of Transportation to the new U.S. Department of Homeland Security, is the principal federal marine enforcement agency for environmental and natural resource regulations in U.S. ocean and coastal waters, and regulates vessel and port safety, security, and environmental protection.

The U.S. Navy contributes significant resources to ocean science activities. Through the Office of Naval Research and the Naval Meteorological and Oceanography Command, the Navy has been instrumental in a number of areas since long before the creation of NOAA. Some of these areas include global ocean and seafloor data collection, archival, modeling, data fusion, and product generation, as well as a wide array of ocean research and technology, diving and salvage technology, deep submergence, ocean engineering and construction, and medical research.

The National Science Foundation supports basic research to further the understanding of all aspects of the global oceans and their interactions with the land and the atmosphere.

Other agencies in the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security also carry out activities with significant ocean components, although typically in a military or security context quite different from the resource management focus of the primary ocean agencies. Programs with ocean-related functions also exist within the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Health and Human Services, Justice, Labor, State, and Transportation and in the U.S. Agency for International Development.

Nevertheless, during the 1970 reorganization that established NOAA, many programs that arguably should have become part of that new agency were left in other departments. Since that time, ocean- and coastal-related programs have continued to proliferate. In some cases, the number of separate agencies addressing a similar issue is not helpful. Such fragmentation diffuses responsibility, introduces unnecessary overlap, raises administrative costs, inhibits communication, and interferes with the development of a comprehensive management regime that addresses issues within an ecosystem-based context.

Programs that may be appropriate for consolidation can be found in several departments and agencies, including DOI, EPA, USACE's Directorate of Civil Works, and NASA. These agencies carry out important functions related to managing and protecting marine areas and resources, conducting science, education, and outreach, and carrying out assessment and prediction in the ocean, coastal, and atmospheric environments. In Phase II of strengthening the federal agency structure, judicious consolidation of ocean- and coastal-related functions and programs will improve policy integration and program effectiveness.

Recommendation 7–3. The Assistant to the President, with advice from the National Ocean Council and the President's Council of Advisors on Ocean Policy, should review federal ocean, coastal, and atmospheric programs, and recommend opportunities for consolidation of similar functions.

Discussion of possible candidates for program consolidation can be found throughout this report, including in Chapter 9 (area-based ocean and coastal resource management), Chapter 14 (nonpoint source pollution), Chapter 16 (vessel pollution), Chapter 17 (invasive species), Chapter 20 (marine mammals), Chapter 22 (aquaculture), and Chapter 26 (satellite Earth observing operations).

Because the legislative process to create or reorganize agencies is often contentious, lengthy, and uncertain, involving multiple committees in both houses of Congress, limited reorganization authority has been granted to the President at various times. In its 2003 report, the Volcker Commission supported the reinstatement of presidential reorganization authority, with suitable congressional oversight, to streamline improvements in the executive branch.³ Allowing the President authority to propose expedited agency reorganization, with a congressional review and approval process that is timely, constitutionally valid, administratively workable, transparent, and accountable, would provide an excellent mechanism to achieve reorganization of federal ocean- and coastal-related agencies and programs more expeditiously.

Box 7.3 Historical Precedent for Presidential Reorganization of the Executive Branch

By historical practice and case law interpretation, the President and Congress have operated on the premise that the power to establish, structure, and reorganize federal agencies is a legislative power, conferred on Congress by the U.S. Constitution. In the absence of a specific statute stating otherwise, the President lacks authority to reorganize executive branch departments and agencies.

Over the last one hundred years, Congress has intermittently granted the President such authority, with a variety of restrictions and with provisions for expedited congressional approval or disapproval of the President's proposals. A total of eighteen reorganization acts were passed between 1932 and 1984.

In 1970, President Nixon used the authority of the Reorganization Act of 1949, which authorized the President to propose agency reorganization subject to congressional disapproval, to propose successfully the establishment of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The most recent presidential reorganization authority expired at the end of 1984.

Recommendation 7–4. Congress should authorize the President to propose structural reorganization of federal departments and agencies, subject to Congressional approval.

In particular, such legislation should:

- *preclude Congress from amending the President’s proposal.*
- *require Congress to vote on the President’s proposal within a specified time period after submission of the plan by the President.*

MANAGING ALL NATURAL RESOURCES IN AN ECOSYSTEM-BASED MANAGEMENT APPROACH: PHASE III

Based on a growing understanding of ecosystems, including recognition of the inextricable links among the sea, land, air, and all living things, a more fundamental reorganization of federal resource agencies will eventually be needed.

As noted, the major ocean- and coastal-related functions of: assessment, prediction, and operations; resource management; and research and education reside in a variety of agencies. Strengthening the performance of ocean, coastal, and atmospheric programs through coordination and consolidation are important steps in moving toward an ecosystem-based management approach. By immediately establishing the National Ocean Council and strengthening NOAA, followed by the consolidation of suitable ocean and coastal programs and functions, the nation will be poised to take a further step in strengthening the federal government structure.

Consolidation of all natural resource functions, including those applicable to oceans and coasts, would enable the federal government to move toward true ecosystem-based management. This could be implemented through the establishment of a Department of Natural Resources or some other structural unification that brings together all of the nation’s natural resource programs.

Recommendation 7–5. Following the establishment of the National Ocean Council and the President’s Council of Advisors on Ocean Policy, the strengthening of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and consolidation of similar federal ocean and coastal programs, the President should propose to Congress a reorganization of the federal government that recognizes the links among all the resources of the sea, land, and air, and establishes a structure for more unified, ecosystem-based management of natural resources.

Table 7.1 Thirty Years of Proposals to Reorganize Federal Management of Ocean and Coastal Resources

Between 1971 and 2001, there were many congressional, presidential, and federal advisory committee proposals to improve the management of oceans and other natural resources within the federal government. Details of these proposals are shown below. The icons on the left of each proposal correspond to Figure 7.1.

- **Ash Council Proposal (1971) for a Department of Natural Resources:** The proposal of the President's Advisory Council on Executive Reorganization called for eight cabinet-level agencies, including a Department of Natural Resources, which would include an Oceanic, Atmospheric, and Earth Science Administration made up of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Geological Survey. The proposal was modified in 1972 to also address the nation's energy resources in the form of a Department of Energy and Natural Resources. Neither proposal was acted upon by Congress.
- **Moss Proposal (1973) for a Department of Natural Resources and Environment:** The proposal (S. 27) called for the creation of a new Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and transferred all of the functions of the Department of the Interior, the Water Resources Council, the Energy Research and Development Administration, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, and the Federal Energy Administration to the new department. Various functions of the Department of Commerce (including NOAA), the Department of Defense (civil works and civil regulatory functions), the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Transportation, and the Environmental Protection Agency were also to be transferred to the new department. The proposal was introduced again in 1975 (also S. 27), but no action was taken on either proposal.
- **Dingell Proposal (1973) for a Department of Natural Resources:** The proposal (H.R. 3249) called for redesignating the Department of the Interior as the Department of Natural Resources and moving NOAA to this department. No action was taken.
- **Holifield Proposal (1973) for a Department of Energy and Natural Resources:** The proposal (H.R. 9090) called for establishing an executive department to be known as the Department of Energy and Natural Resources, with five administrations to include an Oceanic, Atmospheric, and Earth Sciences Administration. NOAA and several other agencies would be transferred to the new department, with a division of functions among the five administrations. No action was taken.
- **McDade Proposal (1974) for a Department of Natural Resources:** The proposal (H.R. 12733) called for redesignating the Department of the Interior as the Department of Natural Resources, within which a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency would be established. No action was taken.
- **Tunney Proposal (1975) for a Department of Natural Resources:** The proposal (S. 2726) called for establishing a new Department of Natural Resources in the executive branch, transferring all of the functions of the Department of the Interior, the Federal Energy Administration, the Federal Energy Research and Development Administration, and the Water Resources Council to the new department. Various functions of the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Agriculture, and Transportation would also be transferred to the new department. The proposal also called for the establishment of an Executive Office of Resource and Materials Policy and a Joint Congressional Committee on Energy, Materials, and the Environment. No action was taken on this proposal.
- **Ribicoff Proposal (1976) for a Department of Energy and Natural Resources:** The proposal (S. 3339) called for establishing a Department of Energy and Natural Resources to assume the nonregulatory functions of specified agencies dealing with the management and conservation of natural resources and energy research. It also proposed to establish, within the Executive Office of the President, the Natural Resources Council to facilitate communication among federal agencies responsible for natural resource management and policy and to recommend improvements in such management and policy. No action was taken.
- **Hollings Proposal (1976) for a Department of the Environment and Oceans:** The proposal (S. 3889) called for creating a Department of the Environment and Oceans, transferring into this new department existing agencies, such as the Environmental Protection Agency, NOAA, and the U.S. Coast Guard, as well as a number of services and programs from both the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Department of the Interior, to deal with the nation's "common property resources." No action was taken.

Table 7.1 (continued) Thirty Years of Proposals to Reorganize Federal Management of Ocean and Coastal Resources

- **Percy Proposal (1977) for a Department of Energy Supply and Natural Resources:** The proposal (S. 591) called for reorganizing federal energy-related activities in the executive branch, temporarily establishing an Energy Policy Council and a cabinet-level Committee on Conservation to establish energy policy objectives. The proposal also called for establishing an executive Department of Energy Supply and Natural Resources, transferring energy and natural resources functions from the Department of the Interior, the Federal Energy Administration, the Energy Research and Development Administration, and the U.S. Forest Service to the new agency, and transferring additional functions to existing departments and agencies. No action was taken.
- **Brooke Proposal (1977) for a Department of Environment and Natural Resources:** The proposal (S. 1481) called for creating a Department of Environment and Natural Resources, transferring all functions of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of the Interior to the new department. Additional authority with respect to oceans, vessel and facility pollution control, coastal zone management, and atmospheric services was also to be transferred to the new department. No action was taken.
- **President Carter's Reorganization Proposal (1978) for a Department of Natural Resources:** The proposal called for a larger governmental reorganization, which included a new Department of Natural Resources, to address the problems being faced on a national scale in the area of natural resource development, with the mission of "managing the nation's natural resources for multiple purposes, including protection, preservation, and wise use." The composition of this new department would be a large part of the Department of the Interior, NOAA, the U.S. Forest Service, and a number of programs from the Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Directorate of Civil Works. Within the department would be five administrations, one of which would be the Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to include the functions of NOAA; the Bureau of Land Management's Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) program; the U.S. Geological Survey Conservation Division's OCS program; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's anadromous fisheries and marine mammal programs; and the Bureau of Reclamation's Weather Modification program. This proposal was not adopted.
- **National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere (advisory to NOAA) (1971–87):** This body, created in 1971 as a result of the Stratton Commission, made a number of recommendations for reorganization. In its 1978 and 1979 reports, the National Advisory Committee on Oceans and Atmosphere recommended that "the President and the Congress should refashion the non-military federal structure dealing with the atmosphere, coastal zone, polar regions, and the oceans...[so as to] centralize programs and federal management elements...to improve control of activities relating to economic development, environmental protection, and scientific and technological capabilities in the oceans and affecting the atmosphere." These recommendations were never implemented.
- **Scheuer Proposal (1983) for an independent NOAA:** The proposal (H.R. 3355) called for establishing NOAA as an independent agency, granting the agency coordination responsibility for oceanic and atmospheric matters, and setting forth the enforcement authority of the administration. No action was taken.
- **Forsythe Proposal (1983) for an independent NOAA:** The proposal (H.R. 3381) called for establishing NOAA as an independent agency, granting it coordination responsibility for oceanic and atmospheric matters, and setting forth the enforcement authority of the administration. The bill reported to the House from the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries, but the proposal was never adopted.
- **Weicker Proposal (1987) for an independent NOAA:** The proposal (S. 821) called for establishing NOAA as an independent federal agency. No action was taken.
- **Lowry Proposal (1988) for an independent NOAA:** The proposal (H.R. 5070) called for establishing NOAA as an independent agency to administer features of U.S. policy with respect to civil oceanic, coastal, and atmospheric activities and programs. No action was taken.
- ▲ **Unsoeld Proposal (1993) for transfer of NOAA functions:** The proposal (H.R. 2761) called for transferring to the Department of the Interior the following NOAA offices and assets: the National Ocean Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, the fleet of research and survey vessels, and the NOAA Corps. It also called for the transfer of components of the National Ocean Service

Table 7.1 (continued) **Thirty Years of Proposals to Reorganize Federal Management of Ocean and Coastal Resources**

that carry out coastal management and assessment programs to the Environmental Protection Agency. No action was taken.

▲ **Chrysler Proposal (1995) for transfer of NOAA functions:** After the House and Senate passed the Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal 1996 (H. Con. Res. 67), which called for eliminating the Department of Commerce as part of a congressional effort to streamline government, increase efficiency, and save taxpayer dollars, Congressman Chrysler introduced H.R. 1756, proposing to eliminate various parts of NOAA and transfer other parts of the agency to other existing agencies as part of an overall proposal to dismantle and wind up the affairs of the Department of Commerce over a period of three years. As with other proposals of this magnitude, the bill was referred to eleven committees, involving an additional ten subcommittees. Several committee members strongly dissented in the House Committee on Ways and Means report (Rept. 104-260), but no specific mention was made about NOAA. Although several subcommittees discharged or reported on the bill, no further action was taken.

● **Abraham Proposal (1995, 1997) for an independent NOAA:** The proposal (S. 929) called for re-establishing NOAA as an independent executive entity, following the abolishment of the Department of Commerce and transferring the functions from the former NOAA to a new NOAA. It also set forth other administrative changes, as well as the coordination of environmental policy. The proposal was reported out of committee to the Senate floor, but action was never taken. Variations of this proposal were introduced again in 1997 (S. 1226 and S. 1316), but no action was taken.

▲ **Royce Proposal (1997) for transfer of NOAA functions:** This proposal (H.R. 1319), similar to earlier House proposals to dismantle the Department of Commerce, called for the termination of various parts of NOAA and the transfer of other parts of the agency to other existing agencies. No action was taken.

● **Royce Proposal (1997) for an independent NOAA:** This proposal (H.R. 2667) was similar to other House proposals to terminate the Department of Commerce, except that it called for creating an independent NOAA, to which any of the former NOAA's functions that were not already terminated or transferred to other agencies by the bill would be transferred. No action was taken.

▲ **Young Proposal (1998) for transfer of certain NOAA functions:** The proposal (H.R. 4335) called for transferring to the Secretary of the Interior the functions of the Secretary of Commerce and the National Marine Fisheries Service under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. No action was taken.

● **Royce Proposal (1999) for an independent NOAA:** The proposal (H.R. 2452) called for re-establishing NOAA as an independent agency in the executive branch, under the supervision and direction of an Administrator of Oceans and Atmosphere. Certain functions would be transferred to a new NOAA: National Marine Fisheries Service functions; all functions performed by the National Ocean Service; National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service functions; Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research functions; and National Weather Service functions. Other programs would be transferred to other existing agencies: coastal nonpoint pollution functions would be transferred to the Environmental Protection Agency; aeronautical mapping and charting functions would be transferred to the Transportation Administrative Services Center at the Department of Transportation; and functions relating to mapping, charting, and geodesy would be moved to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This proposal was part of a larger proposal to terminate the Department of Commerce. It was introduced again in 2001 (H.R. 375). No action was taken on either proposal.

¹ U.S. Commission on Marine Science, Engineering and Resources. *Our Nation and the Sea: A Plan for Action*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1969.

² National Commission on the Public Service. *Urgent Business for America: Revitalizing the Federal Government for the 21st Century*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Center for Public Service, 2003.

³ *Ibid.*