

May 7, 2014

The Honorable Kathryn Sullivan  
Administrator  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Herbert C. Hoover Building, Room 6811  
14<sup>th</sup> Street & Constitution Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Dr. Sullivan:

On behalf of the NOAA Science Advisory Board (SAB), I am pleased to transmit to you the report from the SAB review of the Cooperative Institute for Marine Ecosystems and Climate (CIMEC). The review panel found that scientific research in each of CIMEC's four research themes is well aligned with three of the four long-term goals stated in NOAA's next generation strategic plan (NGSP). CIMEC research efforts are also aligned with at least one of the major long-term goals of the University of California System. The review panel concluded that CIMEC, as a consortium of seven geographically distributed institutes and universities in California, is a very valuable member of the NOAA CI community. It therefore assigned an overall rating of Outstanding, based mainly on the excellence of CIMEC's scientific research and education/outreach projects across all themes.

The review panel felt that the management of CIMEC is in capable hands, and that the CIMEC business plan will need to be responsive to on-going fiscal challenges, as three of the seven partners of CIMEC are still largely unfunded. CIMEC is positioning itself to take advantage of opportunities for better networking, coordination, and efficiency through ongoing opportunities such as the recent April 2014 workshop on Climate Impacts on California Current Ecosystems. CIMEC remains committed to helping NOAA achieve their mission and goals, and in working toward much better integration of its excellent science with resource management and policy. Based upon these findings, the Panel issued twelve recommendations for CIMEC (mostly of a process nature), and five for NOAA.

At its April 2014 meeting, the SAB vetted the report to ensure that these recommendations were clearly supported by the panel's findings. The recommendations prompting the most discussion included:

- improving the integration of the science themes of observing, climate, and fisheries ecology with social science and policy;
- implementing a plan for using and distributing education and outreach funds anticipated through the new Task 1B formula when it becomes available;
- collaborating with a new cooperative science center, should one be funded at a minority-serving institutions in California;
- ensuring that both NOAA and CIMEC consider ways to improve links between NOAA labs and academic partners (especially those not currently funded);
- NOAA taking the lead in coordinating visits of unfunded CIMEC partners and young PIs to NOAA headquarters to learn of NOAA opportunities and, conversely, help NOAA learn about and recognize their work; and
- NOAA ensuring that the western regional collaboration team includes the CIMEC director and co-director in their meetings.

A major concern of both the review panel and the SAB is that a formal strategic plan for CIMEC does not yet exist. Hence, the Strategic Plan section of the report and the recommendation for CIMEC to develop an integrative strategic plan with metrics for success received the most attention. Indeed, developing such a plan will be extremely important in providing a framework for improving collaborative efforts among all seven CIMEC partners and in setting priorities and identifying opportunities at the NOAA level. These opportunities include leveraging the uniqueness of CIMEC in helping NOAA realize *new and unmet* needs using collaborative approaches.

CIMEC is clearly beneficial to implementation of NOAA's strategic plan, and the review panel encourages NOAA to continue supporting CIMEC. However, the SAB strongly suggests that CIMEC convene its council of fellows and partners in order to produce a viable strategic plan within the next 6 months, before receiving that continued support. The SAB accepts the report of the review panel and agrees that CIMEC is providing an invaluable service to NOAA and the nation.

Please let me know if you have any questions, comments or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RJB', is positioned above the typed name.

**Raymond J. Ban**

Chair, NOAA Science Advisory Board  
Managing Director, Ban & Associates, LLC

Attachment

cc: Dawn Wright  
Philip Hoffman  
Julien Lartigue  
Sanya Compton  
Cynthia Decker