

May 16, 2014

The Honorable Dr. 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 review report, "Restoration of Coastal Habitats: An Evaluation of NOAA's Current and Potential Role." The Ecosystem Science and Management Working Group (ESMWG) prepared this report on behalf of the SAB, which then reviewed and approved it at the April 2014 SAB meeting.

The Restoration of Coastal Habitats report aims to understand where and how restoration is supported within NOAA, the restoration benefits that are assessed by NOAA, and how NOAA uses its role in guiding restoration efforts directly and indirectly. The review incorporates results from a formal questionnaire posed to NOAA restoration programs developed by the ESMWG with NOAA senior and key staff, input from formal discussions with NOAA senior and field staff, and independent research conducted by the ESMWG. The review report found that restoration is a significant component of NOAA's work and that NOAA increasingly serves as an advisor on the best use of significant levels of restoration funds. NOAA is one of a very small handful of truly global leaders in coastal and marine restoration.

The review report identified detailed findings and recommendations for both NOAA's direct and indirect restoration projects. Direct projects are defined as those where restoration funds are administered by NOAA directly. Indirect projects are those where funds are administered by other agencies, but NOAA has a tangible role in guiding how those funds are spent.

The review report found that NOAA's direct restoration projects focus on multiple benefits of restoration and are likely to deliver these benefits (i.e., ecosystem services), but have little emphasis on measuring the benefits other than fisheries. Recommendations relating to NOAA's direct restoration projects are summarized as follows:

1. NOAA should track and make available (to NOAA and the public) information regarding its existing measures in the NOAA Restoration Atlas or the National Estuaries Restoration Inventory (NERI) database ensuring consistency and accuracy in the data.
2. NOAA should more clearly recognize that its restoration mandates extend well beyond fisheries and should more clearly measure additional benefits beyond fisheries. NOAA center(s) of restoration excellence should be identified to focus on these mandates and benefits.

3. NOAA should undertake a Return on Investment analysis on a small subsample of projects that cover multiple objectives and should scale its restoration projects to more clearly fit desired objectives.

Additionally, NOAA is a key advisor of habitat restoration investments for indirect restoration projects and has a true opportunity to guide these investments toward specific restoration benefits. The report provided three recommendations for NOAA's indirect restoration projects:

4. NOAA's strategic and implementation plans must have a greater focus on leveraging the restoration funds of others to achieve multiple benefits, including coastal fisheries.
5. NOAA should formally recognize that its expertise in coastal habitat restoration can provide added value to coastal habitats by advising and directing non-appropriated funds.
6. NOAA should highlight the role it plays in working with its agency partners on projects, illustrating the separate skill sets that its staff and those of other agencies bring to the table to ensure the success of complex restoration projects.

The SAB encourages NOAA to incorporate these recommendations into its direct and indirect restoration projects. The SAB respectfully requests a response from NOAA to these recommendations by the Spring 2015 SAB meeting. Please let me know if you have any questions, comments or concerns.

Sincerely,



**Raymond J. Ban**

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

Attachment

cc: Peter Kareiva  
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