



Final Report of the Research and Development Portfolio Review Task Force

A Presentation to the
NOAA Science Advisory Board

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Outline



- Purpose
- Discussion of Comments
- Changes in Report
- Request SAB comments and approval of final report



Purpose



- To present the final report from the Task Force to the SAB for review and approval



Public Comment Period



- The Task Force presented its draft report to the SAB at the November meeting and incorporated comments into a revised draft.
- The draft was posted for a 30-day public comment period, December 26, 2012-January 23, 2013.
- The Task Force held a teleconference meeting on February 1, 2013 to discuss comments and changes to be made to the report. Revisions were made.
- A penultimate version was circulated, and the Task Force held a second teleconference, March 8 to come to unanimous agreement on the language and content; this final report reflects that agreement.



Public Comments



- Task Force members were pleased to see the interest in the report as evidenced by the number of comments as well as the thoughtful nature of the comments submitted.
- 64 comments were received; of which:
 - 51 were from individuals, 13 from groups;
 - 40 of the individual comments were from Federal employees, 38 of these were NOAA employees.
 - Of the 11 comments from non-Federal individuals, 9 were from Cooperative Institute staff.



Key criticisms of report

- Some wanted more detailed research recommendations
- Some expressed concerns expressed about increased extramural investment – requested more rationale
- A few commented on Taskforce composition – too academic, or stacked with certain fields
- Negative reactions to what might be called “tone” in places as too dogmatic, not giving NOAA enough leeway
- Too many recommendations—often overlapping
- Worries that R&D not mentioned was implicitly less important or low priority



Report Changes

- In the section on the Task Force Charge, emphasized that short time frame made it impossible to prescribe detailed priorities for NOAA R&D. Rather the Task Force highlighted scientific areas that needed to be strengthened and made recommendations on how NOAA's R&D priorities should be organized to be responsive to the Next Generation Strategic Plan.
- Similarly wording was added that it was not possible for the Task Force to highlight all important R&D activities in NOAA in the report.
- Based on questions raised in the public comments, the Task Force clarified wording in some recommendations and streamlined the number of recommendations from 17 to 10.



Report Changes

- Added wording to indicate that NOAA's success in fulfilling its mandate and mission depends upon an appropriately balanced and funded portfolio of research, both intramural and extramural. The balance is dynamic and will change over time.
- The internal investment is required to fulfill the agency's mandates and to ensure long-term stable funding of key research and observational programs.
- The extramural investment allows greater flexibility and agility and takes on added importance during periods of severe budgetary constraints, rapidly changing scientific problems, and a greying workforce.
- Both the intramural and extramural components require stability and predictability in funding levels.



Report Changes

- On reductions in existing staff positions, changed language to be less dogmatic and to allow flexibility while maintaining the message that strategic realignments would need to be made in order for growth in high priority areas.
- Made the description of Chief Scientist less about the details of the appointment, and more about the need for someone with primary responsibility to oversee R&D, and align investments with next generation strategic plan through some budgetary authority.
- Added a more explicit section discussion of data gathering and findings that linked to the subsequent recommendations.



Summary of Recommendations (now 10 instead of 17)



1. The PRTF recommends that in addition to its core strengths, NOAA needs to develop additional capacity in the socioeconomic and integrated ecosystem sciences.
2. The PRTF recommends that NOAA should emphasize, highlight, and provide incentives to support the seamless integration of research and services in both its Research to Operations (R2O) and Operations to Research (O2R) enterprises.
3. The PRTF recommends that the SAB, in partnership with NOAA, form a special scientific task force to review existing observing capabilities, examine options for more cost-effective observation and data sharing strategies, and discuss evolving needs and sustainable approaches for new observations and technologies.



Summary of Recommendations



4. The PRTF recommends that the responsibilities and authority of the current Chief Scientist position be significantly enhanced to provide the necessary tools to ensure the total R&D effort is aligned with NOAA's priorities. This will require budget authority so that resources can be matched to priorities.
5. The PRTF recommends that NOAA maintain a strong and productive internal scientific staff in its laboratories and centers.
6. The PRTF recommends that NOAA should assess the Cooperative Institutes in terms of their scientific focus, funding and staffing levels to insure that the CIs have sufficient support to adequately leverage NOAA's investment, and that they are aligned with strategic priorities.
7. The PRTF recommends that NOAA should critically examine its distribution of R&D funds and allocation of scientific staff within the agency to better align with the Next Generation Strategic Plan.



Summary of Recommendations



8. The PRTF recommends that NOAA capitalize on the support and skills of the extramural research community by developing carefully targeted initiatives that meet the needs of the Next Generation Strategic plan, that are stable and consistent over time to enable year to year planning, and that ensure the results are integrated into NOAA's R&D operations.

9. The PRTF recommends that in the current Federal budget situation, it is imperative that NOAA make the most of its existing talent and find ways to accelerate and enhance learning and professional development of that talent.

10. The PRTF recommends that NOAA work closely with the Department of Commerce, the Office of Management and Budget, and with the Congress to create ways to manage its R&D funds more flexibly and efficiently and to implement its new research priorities over a period of several years.



Concluding Remarks



- The bottom line for NOAA R&D is that business as usual is not an option. Profound changes are needed to meet the emerging challenges facing the Nation with regard to ocean resources and climate and weather disruptions and their impacts on life and property in the United States. Either NOAA makes thoughtful internal changes to sharpen its R&D focus, or else external factors will force, rapid, likely ill-conceived changes on the Agency.



Desired Outcome



- Receive any changes to the report from the SAB.
- Request the SAB approve the report and transmit it to NOAA.



Backup Slides

