



## Dauphin Island Sea Lab

October 18, 2006

Dr. Margaret Leinen, National Science Foundation  
Dr. Richard Spinrad, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
Dr. Dan Walker, Office of Science and Technology Policy  
Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology  
Office of Science and Technology Policy  
Executive Office of the President  
725 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Drs. Leinen, Spinrad, and Walker:

Please find enclosed comments regarding the National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology (JSOST) draft report, "Charting the Course for Ocean Science in the United States: Research Priorities for the Next Decade." It is my privilege to submit these on behalf of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network.

For reference, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance has identified five priority issues:

- Water quality for healthy beaches and shellfish beds.
- Wetland and coastal conservation and restoration.
- Environmental education.
- Identification and characterization of Gulf habitats.
- Reductions in nutrient inputs to coastal ecosystems.

These issues are expressed in 11 priority actions for the Gulf region in the *Governors' Action Plan for Healthy and Resilient Coasts*<sup>1</sup> approved in March 2006 by the five U.S. Gulf State Governors. This *Plan* was developed by professionals in their respective fields, as well as through community workshops held throughout the U.S. Gulf coast. An overarching thread is highly visible in the fabric of all five issues, i.e., the need for improved environmental education and communication at all levels, to all audiences.

With the premise that we are advocating environmental education and the understanding that the current JSOST draft report reflects, "Research Priorities for the Next Decade," we submit the following comments. In light of the JSOST approach to research, the Gulf of Mexico Alliance Environmental Education Network (GOMA-EEN) encourages you to expand this vision to include education and outreach practices.

While it was noted in the briefing presentation that this effort reflects a change in approach toward ocean sciences research, we recognize that some intrinsic research needs are identified. It is in this arena where often the creative successes lead toward more practical approaches to questions posed within the scientific community. Equally, we applaud that applied science has been expanded to contain a broader, more collaborative connection between "hard" and "soft" sciences, thereby creating a synergy for applied sciences that will work more effectively. To that end, the GOMA-EEN has observed on nearly every page of the document phrases, such as the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Document can be obtained by going to website <http://www.dep.state.fl.us/gulf/>.

“Wise stewardship and sensible management ...”

“Societal well-being, quality of life, and economy ...”

“... develop the information and tools necessary to carry out ...”

“... change how society takes action ...”

“... management and government systems that are informed by scientific understanding ...”

“... use by policy and decision makers.”

To manage the environment and promote stewardship, one must first understand what should be fostered. In order for the audiences implied in the previous phrases to utilize new information, a connection to these groups must be made. Research knowledge gained must go hand in hand with those for whom the information is intended. To make a difference and establish an ocean literate nation, the GOMA-EEN believes and suggests that education and communication must be included in the broader scope across all disciplines.

To truly change the manner in which research is approached, one must also engage in education, hand in hand, with that change in order to sustain the technology and advances being sought throughout the various components of society. Actions of education are often generational. Society does not see the full effects of change until a full cycle of child to adult is realized in the workforce. If improved ocean literacy is to become a reality, education must be elevated to a higher level of importance within research opportunities.

The GOMA-EEN recommends:

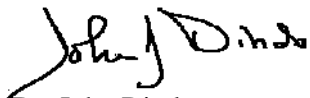
- At a minimum, *Making A Difference* should be moved to a more forward position within the document.
- A component of communication and education be included in near term priorities.
- Elevating education, outreach, and communication to an Overarching Opportunity.

On behalf the GOMA-EEN, it is my pleasure to submit these comments. I would like to thank the Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology for this opportunity to express our views and recommendations for the further development of a comprehensive research priorities plan.

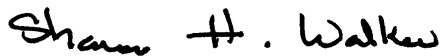
Sincerely,



Lee Yokel  
Environmental Education Coordinator  
Environmental Education Network  
Gulf of Mexico Alliance



Dr. John Dindo  
Assistant Director  
Dauphin Island Sea Lab



Dr. Sharon Walker  
Professor Emeritus, Department of Coastal Sciences  
The University of Southern Mississippi  
J. L. Scott Marine Education

Cc: GOMA-EEN