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Communicating about the  
**Integrated Ocean  
Observing System**

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*A Communications Toolkit*



*August 2008*



I N T E G R A T E D O C E A N O B S E R V I N G S Y S T E M

# Communicating about the Integrated Ocean Observing System: A Communications Toolkit

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Building – and sustaining – the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®) requires adequate, long-term support. Although IOOS® is comprised of many technical elements and diverse partners, it is by design a coherent undertaking that is critical to our national interests. Garnering needed support requires *clear* and *consistent* communication about IOOS from all involved partners.

To help all those involved with IOOS® define and explain the value and benefits of the system in a clear and consistent way, a working group composed of representatives from the National Federation of Regional Associations for Coastal and Ocean Observing (NFRA), the National Office for Integrated and Sustained Ocean Observations (Ocean.US), and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) developed a “communications toolkit” that is geared primarily towards communicating with policy makers, such as Members of Congress and the White House Office of Management and Budget, who exercise great influence over the current and future direction of IOOS®.

This document includes *key messages* and an outline for building an *elevator speech* for IOOS®. These elements are not intended to be used as scripts. You are encouraged to incorporate these concepts into your own words, making the information relevant to the audiences and situations you encounter. Also included is *boilerplate language* that can be repeated on printed communication materials to consistently define what IOOS® is and how it benefits the nation.

## Background Information

The information captured in this document is intended to help you communicate with key audiences, in particular policy makers, about IOOS® in a consistent way that meets the primary communication objective. Concepts can be incorporated into specific communication products, with information tailored and made relevant using specific examples/situations as appropriate.

**Communication Objective:** Support partnerships for IOOS®.

**Target Audiences:** In communicating about IOOS®, information will need to be tailored to meet the needs and interests of each audience. Target audiences for IOOS® communications include:

- Policy makers
- The Office of Management and Budget
- General public
- NOAA and other federal agencies
- Ocean data user groups (e.g., search and rescue teams, mariners, recreational fishermen)
- Researchers
- Industry
- Donors
- Charitable foundations
- Media

## Integrated Ocean Observing System Message Guidelines

This guide presents Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®) messages and supporting points. Below is a description of what is meant by “messages.” Remember that these messages and supporting points are *not a script*; they are intended as *guidelines* to help you frame your communications according to specific situations.

**Core/Key Messages:** The core and key messages are general concepts that all IOOS® partners are encouraged to incorporate into discussions, print materials, and other resources used in communication, education, information, and other outreach efforts. These messages are umbrella statements that require additional supporting points and examples for context. The messages *do not need to be repeated word-for-word*—in delivering the message, hold back from including every detail and implicitly invite audiences to “fill in the blank” and reach the final conclusion on their own.

**Supporting Points:** Supporting points provide detail for the messages, providing context and greater explanation of how IOOS® relates to “safety, the economy, and the environment.” Supporting points also help to tailor messages to a particular audience.

**Examples:** Local and regional examples are inherent to further placing the messages and supporting points into context for audiences—connecting audiences on a personal and emotional level. While examples are not presented in this document, you are encouraged to develop specific examples to help to further refine messages and target a particular audience.

### The Integrated Ocean Observing System: *Our Eyes on the Oceans, Coasts, and Great Lakes*

Your support is needed to advance the Integrated Ocean Observing System—a vital tool for tracking, predicting, managing, and adapting to changes in our coastal and ocean environment.

- **S**afety: IOOS® helps ensure the safety and security of citizens now and into the future.
- **E**conomy: IOOS® unlocks economic and business benefits of the ocean.
- **E**nvironment: IOOS® is key to protecting our environment for generations to come.

### Core Message *(with supporting points)*

**Your support is needed to advance the Integrated Ocean Observing System—a vital tool for tracking, predicting, managing, and adapting to changes in our coastal and ocean environment.**

- Our planet is constantly changing. Right now, it is changing quickly and in ways that could greatly impact every sector of our society. Our oceans remain poorly understood and sparsely monitored. Even what we do know is fragmented, and we don’t have the tools in place to connect all the information. IOOS® is the solution to coordinating and connecting scattered ocean data so that information is comprehensive, clear, usable, and available to inform decision making.

- From driving our weather and climate, to providing highways for marine commerce and transportation, recreational opportunities, and natural resources, the oceans are critically important to our society. An integrated network for monitoring the oceans can improve our ability to predict hurricanes, floods, and climate change, helping us to protect lives, property, and the environment.
- IOOS® benefits everyone. Over the next decade, IOOS® will improve the safety and efficiency of maritime operations; reduce public health risks; help to protect and restore coastal ecosystems more effectively; and enable the sustained use of ocean and coastal resources.

## Key Messages *(with supporting points/examples)*

### **Safety: IOOS® helps ensure the safety and security of citizens now and into the future.**

- IOOS® brings together data and delivers the tools needed to increase understanding of the connections between the ocean and weather. This allows us to better predict when and where severe weather will strike. Earlier predictions mean more time to get people out of harm's way – saving lives.
- Integrated ocean observations will enhance our ability to forecast negative changes in the environment, delivering predictions well in advance of hazardous events. Earlier predictions mean decision makers can take quicker and more targeted actions, such as closing beaches to avoid illness caused by harmful algal blooms.
- Rapid access to integrated ocean observations such as surface current speed and direction, weather conditions, and wave heights will better support search and rescue efforts, increasing survivorship when someone is lost at sea.
- IOOS® combines data such as surface current speed and direction, satellite images showing ocean color, weather conditions, and wave heights. The delivery of this information allows coastal communities to protect water quality and public health.
- Ocean observation technologies employed by IOOS® can detect ships, thus enhancing the security of our nation's ports and harbors.

### **Economy: IOOS® unlocks economic and business benefits of the ocean.**

- Integrated ocean observations will enable the development of improved ocean forecasts for maritime operators, allowing mariners to optimize shipping routes for increased fuel efficiency and faster deliveries.
- Integrated ocean observations will lead to more accurate, longer-term forecasts that farmers can use to help decide what type of crop to plant, when to plant it, and when to harvest – saving crops from weather events such as droughts, floods, or frosts.
- IOOS® delivers data that decision makers can use to better plan zoning and coastal construction projects. With more information comes better solutions and better planning, helping to minimize adverse effects of weather, rising sea level, and flooding, thus reducing property damage and saving lives and dollars.

- Scientists can use integrated ocean observations to unlock the ocean's potential as a source for medicines and new technology. Medicines derived from marine microorganisms are used to treat chronic pain, asthma, and cancer. New industrial chemicals derived from the ocean, such as powerful adhesives, are also on the horizon.
- Integrated ocean observations provide information that is critical to the identification and evaluation of alternative energy sources – such as wave, tidal, and wind energy.
- Through IOOS<sup>®</sup>, offshore oil and gas companies will have better access to data on oceans and weather. This will allow improved predictions of how ocean conditions and severe weather may affect drilling operations and infrastructure. This broader picture will permit more informed decisions about when to drill, how to design and build stronger facilities that can survive severe weather and natural hazards, and when to evacuate personnel during storms and hurricanes.

## **Environment: IOOS<sup>®</sup> is key to protecting our environment for generations to come.**

- Ocean observations, when available quickly and in formats that work together, allow scientists to rapidly incorporate more information into computer models. This leads to more timely and accurate predictions of the fate and transport of spilled oil and other pollutants. Delivering these better predictions to decision makers will enhance response operations and diminish environmental damage.
- By delivering information that improves the ability of ships to safely transit waters, IOOS<sup>®</sup> can reduce the number of vessel groundings, reducing physical damage to marine ecosystems such as delicate coral reefs.
- Ocean observations, such as data on the shape of the ocean floor and aerial images of the coastline, can be used together to identify ecological areas that need protection, track ecological change, and take steps to manage or adapt to this change – protecting precious resources.
- Integrated ocean observations enable fisheries managers to make better decisions regarding harvest seasons and to determine protected areas, allowing fishermen to maximize harvests and economic returns while protecting fish populations.
- Data provided by IOOS<sup>®</sup> will permit more effective protection and restoration of healthy marine ecosystems and support the sustained use of marine resources.
- IOOS<sup>®</sup> combines data from many different sources, permitting better understanding of pressures on the coastal environment. The delivery of this information allows coastal communities to better protect vulnerable marine habitats such as coral reefs.

# Integrated Ocean Observing System Elevator Speech Guidelines

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The Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®) “elevator speech” is a short speech explaining what IOOS® is, what problem(s) IOOS® can solve, the benefits of IOOS®, and how the listener can contribute.

The speech needs to flow easily for the speaker. The guidelines presented here are not meant as a script: Rather than providing several paragraphs that the speaker is unlikely to memorize, the format provides an outline to help you craft a speech you can remember and present in your own voice.

Because the elements of the guide are derived from the identified IOOS® messages, following the guidelines will ensure consistency in overall message while allowing room to tailor information.

To “assemble” an IOOS® speech, select one item under each of the three headings and tailor that information to make it relevant to your audience. Speeches should be short (less than 250 words in length) and take less than 90 seconds to read.

Several examples of speeches created following the basic guidelines are provided for reference.

## Assembling an IOOS® Elevator Speech

### 1. Problem statement: Hook to grab listener’s attention.

- The oceans drive weather and climate, so if we understand the oceans better, we should be able to better forecast weather/climate
- Our nation’s security, environment, and economy all depend on our ability to understand, monitor, manage, and adapt to changes in our oceans and Great Lakes
- We know little about the oceans, yet they impact us everyday
- Our planet is changing quickly in ways that will impact everyone, but exactly how remains unclear

### 2. The solution: Define IOOS®.

- IOOS® is a network of people pulling all ocean information together into one source so it is easily accessible and can be used together, giving scientists and decision makers a “bigger picture” view of environmental change
- IOOS® is a tool for tracking, predicting, managing, and adapting to changes in our coastal and ocean environments
- IOOS® is a network of people and tools coordinating and connecting more and better information about our oceans and coasts

### 3. Benefits/gain/proof: Use messages.

- General:
  - Observing is the foundation of understanding. With increased understanding of our oceans and coasts comes an increased ability to keep our nation *safe*, our *economy* secure, and our *environment* healthy and productive

- o IOOS® will allow us to track, predict, manage, and adapt to changes in our coastal and ocean environments, meaning better weather and climate forecasts, safer and more cost-effective marine transportation, reduced public health risks, better protection and restoration of coastal ecosystems, etc.
- IOOS® helps ensure the safety and security of citizens now and into the future. For example, *[insert specific, illustrative example]*
- IOOS® unlocks the economic and business benefits of the ocean. For example, *[insert specific, illustrative example]*
- IOOS® protects the environment. For example, *[insert specific, illustrative example]*

#### 4. Request specific action

- Ask for more time
- Schedule a later meeting to provide more info
- Ask for assistance
- Ask the listener to become a partner/share data

### Examples of IOOS® Elevator Speeches

#### *Example #1:*

The Integrated Ocean Observing System, or “IOOS®,” serves as our eyes on the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. This vital tool tracks, predicts, manages, and adapts to changes in our coastal and ocean environments.

- **IOOS® helps ensure the safety and security** of citizens by bringing together data and tools to better predict severe weather, forecast negative environmental changes such as harmful algal blooms, increase survivorship when someone is lost at sea, protect public health, improve homeland security, and more.
- **IOOS® unlocks the economic and business benefits** of the ocean by enabling forecasts that mariners can use to plan optimal shipping routes and that farmers can use to successfully plan crops, providing information for better planning and zoning to protect coastal property, helping offshore oil and gas companies operate more safely and efficiently, and more.
- **IOOS® is key to protecting the environment**, allowing scientists faster and more accurate access to information following an oil or chemical spill, decreasing the risk of vessel groundings, enabling fisheries managers to make decisions about harvest seasons, and more.

Why observe our oceans and coasts? Because observing is the foundation of understanding. With increased understanding of our oceans comes an increased ability to keep our nation safe, our economy secure, and our environment healthy and productive for us now and for generations to come.

*[~ 220 words; 1 minute, 15 seconds to read]*

**Example #2:**

Our nation's security, environment, and economy are all linked to changes in our oceans and Great Lakes. These changes are happening quickly, in ways that we are not able to fully understand. One tool to increase our understanding is the Integrated Ocean Observing System, or IOOS<sup>®</sup>. This network of people and tools coordinates and connects more and better information about our oceans and coasts.

Increased understanding of oceans obtained through IOOS<sup>®</sup> will keep our nation safe, our environment healthy and productive, and our economy secure. For example, integrated ocean information has helped reduce transit times of ships along the New England coast, saving an estimated \$500,000 a year. Reduced shipping costs in turn mean that just about everything you buy costs less. IOOS<sup>®</sup> information is valuable to oil spill response, healthy beach assessment, search and rescue, coastal planning and development, even farming and more. The benefits are far-reaching and apply to everyone.

In order to fully realize the potential of IOOS<sup>®</sup>, we need your support. Can we talk again?

[~170 words; 50 seconds to read]

**Example #3:**

Our nation's security, environment, and economy all depend on our ability to understand, monitor, manage, and adapt to changes in our oceans and Great Lakes. The Integrated Ocean Observing System, or IOOS<sup>®</sup>, is one tool to enhance this ability.

IOOS<sup>®</sup> is a network of people pulling all ocean information together into one source so it is easily accessible and can be used together to provide scientists and decision makers with a "bigger picture" view of environmental change. IOOS<sup>®</sup> has already been put to the test, helping improve weather forecasts, helping responders track oil slicks after a spill, or allowing officials to make better decisions in planning coastal development. With increased understanding of our oceans and coasts comes an increased ability to keep our nation safe, our economy secure, and our environment healthy and productive.

The value added from the integrating and sustaining power of IOOS<sup>®</sup> will only be realized through partnerships and collaboration. Even sharing small amounts of data can reap significant benefits. Can we talk about how you can get involved?

[~170 words; 45 seconds to read]

**Example #4:**

Did you know that the oceans drive our weather and climate? So it makes sense that if we understand the oceans better, we should be able to better forecast weather and climate, right?

To collect, coordinate, and disseminate information about the oceans in a way currently not possible, we are assembling a network of people and tools called the Integrated Ocean Observing System, or IOOS<sup>®</sup>. By bringing more and better ocean information together, IOOS<sup>®</sup> can provide scientists and decision makers with a more comprehensive understanding of the linkages between our oceans and weather. This view will translate into better forecasts of severe weather, helping to protect the lives and property of our citizens. For example, in 2006, integrated ocean information allowed early public warnings during a severe New England storm. As a result, no lives were lost and emergency managers had the information they needed to limit coastal damage.

Even greater benefits will be realized as this emerging system is completed. By keeping an eye on our nation's oceans and coasts, IOOS<sup>®</sup> will improve our ability to keep our nation safe, improve our economy, and protect our environment.

Long-term support for this critical infrastructure is needed to ensure the safety, economy, and environmental well-being of our nation.

[~225 words; 1 minute, 15 seconds to read]

## Integrated Ocean Observing System Boilerplate Text

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“Boilerplate” is an old news printing term referring to a block of standard text that is used over and over again without being changed. The Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®) boilerplate explains what IOOS® does and how it benefits the nation, becoming in a sense the IOOS® “signature.”

Including the IOOS® boilerplate on *all* print or written materials helps strengthen the IOOS® messages through repetition. The IOOS® boilerplate can appear on materials such as:

- Press releases
- Web sites
- Brochures
- Fact sheets
- Technical reports
- Posters

### The IOOS® Boilerplate

As our eyes on the oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes, the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS®) is a tool for tracking, predicting, managing, and adapting to changes in our marine environment. IOOS® delivers the data and information needed to increase our understanding of our coastal waters so decision makers can take action to improve safety, enhance our economy, and protect our environment.

