U.S. IOOS Spring Meeting Summary

March 14, 2017

Coastal States Organization
444 N Capitol Street NW, Rm. 333
Washington, DC 20002
Overview

The IOOS Regional Association Spring Meeting took place on March 14, 2017 in Washington, DC. The eleven IOOS Regional Association (RA) Executive Directors, staff from the U.S. IOOS Program office, and several Interagency Ocean Observing Committee (IOOC) partners participated in a facilitated discussion and working session on the new U.S. IOOS Enterprise Strategic Plan (2018-22).

Below is a detailed summary. Click here to access the meeting website and materials.

Welcome, Introduction and Overview of the Day

Carl Gouldman, U.S. IOOS Program Office
Josie Quintrell, IOOS Association

Carl Gouldman welcomed and thanked participants for attending the meeting. As the new Executive Director of the U.S. IOOS Program, Carl committed to visit each RA and to develop a new U.S. IOOS Enterprise Strategic Plan (2018-22) to provide a clear vision and establish priorities for the next 5 years.

U.S. IOOS priorities continue to align with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), specifically the National Ocean Service within NOAA, and the mandates codified in the ICOOS Act (2009). The core priorities for the U.S. IOOS Program are to work across all agencies, support and champion all RA efforts, and continue to support to the Coastal and Ocean Modeling Testbed (COMT) and the Alliance of Coastal Technology (ACT). U.S. IOOS will continue to deliver high-quality data and aims to be the data and information leaders of the U.S., fostering cooperation and delivering benefits. Our work is directed towards the common goal of maintaining advancement of what the ICOOS Act defines as “a national integrated System of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes observing systems.”

In the role of U.S. IOOS Executive Director, Carl will focus on how the Enterprise can innovate to meet customer needs. At U.S. IOOS, we are growing our capabilities to expand our data reach while listening to stakeholder needs. To demonstrate the value of U.S. IOOS, essential IOOS partners should engage with stakeholders to identify user-needs and work to describe and document how IOOS information supports successful decision-making outcomes.

In FY 17, U.S. IOOS is building a new strategic plan to advance IOOS to the next level of ocean observing and data integration. There remain varied perspectives on what the System is and should be, and the strategic plan is intended to provide clarity and direction to the U.S. IOOS Enterprise.
In fall 2016, RA Directors performed an initial Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis. The SWOT analysis is the foundation of the new IOOS strategic plan. Carl outlined the main takeaways from the 2016 SWOT:

- Many respondents pointed to DMAC and cross-Enterprise partnerships as strengths and believe that the System is already proving itself as an important and flexible tool to the Nation.
- We have room to grow in communicating about the great collaborations that are ongoing, acknowledging collaborating can be confusing in terms of expectation management and attribution of credit.
- The complex structure of IOOS is a curse and a blessing. It complicates relationships, but it offers the unique opportunity to forge real connections between disparate observing activities--federal and non-federal--and to support new technologies and advance observing capabilities for the Nation.
- The struggles the System faces by being so diverse and complex, e.g. who really gets the credit for IOOS successes and are we flexible and aligned enough to adapt to changing leadership and forces within and outside the system?

**IOOS Strategic Planning Process**

*U.S. IOOS Program Office*

*IOOS Regional Associations*

*Interagency Ocean Observation Committee (IOOC) Members*

*Ora Grodsky, Just Works Consulting*

The purpose of the new IOOS strategic planning initiative is to build an U.S. IOOS Enterprise Strategic Plan that provides guidance and communicates shared priorities for the next 5 years. This is a community process and everyone will have an opportunity to provide input into the plan. The strategic planning initiative is an opportunity to harness our message and move forward in alignment with the new Administration. The components of the strategic plan are:

- “U.S. IOOS Enterprise” defined
- Vision & Mission
- Guiding Principles
- Core Capabilities
- Strategic Opportunities
- Broad Goals and Objectives

This process will build upon more than a decade of previous U.S. IOOS strategic planning work. The updated plan will reflect a vision of IOOS current capabilities, reflect major advancements in
observing trends over the past decade, and demonstrate how IOOS will help secure the future of observing, monitoring, and predictions.

The five-phased strategic planning process includes two rounds of stakeholder engagement and the development of a draft and final strategic plan for community review.

Consideration of Existing Vision and Mission Breakout Session

**Overview: Vision and mission revision**
Meeting participants separated into breakout teams to review the current U.S. IOOS vision and mission statements (below). Breakout groups then proposed updated vision and mission statements. Participants agreed that the existing vision and mission statements’ general content and substance is good. They recommend reducing the text and getting rid of buzzwords to provide more relatable, plain language statements.

**Vision statement (2013)**
“IOOS is an innovative public/private enterprise of integrated national and regional ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes observations that equips the Nation to face natural and manmade risks to economic growth, prosperity, and survivability, and to ensure a safe, productive, and resilient ocean and coastal zone.” (Source: Federal Advisory Committee)

**Mission statement (2008)**
“Lead the integration of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes observing capabilities, in collaboration with Federal and non-Federal partners, to maximize access to data and generation of information products, inform decision making, and promote economic, environmental, and social benefits to our Nation and the world.” (Source: NOAA IOOS Strategic Plan)

**Vision statement discussion**
Participants supported the “innovative public-private partnership” description of IOOS but thought the statement was not aspirational enough. The current statement describes who we are but does not sufficiently address where we are going. During breakout group report-outs, participants recommended reducing the text and reframing to something that is more inspiring. There was agreement that the vision should be rephrased into a positive statement and include the concept of IOOS as a reliable backbone for services supporting economic prosperity.

**Proposed vision statements (draft):**
*An aspirational description of what an organization would like to achieve or accomplish in the next 5 years.*

1. Everyday decision-making is strengthened by IOOS providing eyes on the ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes.
2. Lives, property, and the environment are protected by the high-quality information delivered by IOOS.
3. Innovative public-private partnerships integrating ocean and coastal observing systems promote economic, environmental, and social benefits.
4. Safety, economy, and stewardship are bolstered through the integration and production of high-quality ocean and coastal information.
5. Safety, prosperity, and security are supported by high-quality ocean, coast and the Great Lakes information.

**Mission statement discussion**
Participants agreed that *lead* is a good word to begin the mission statement. The current mission provided a good start but it is too long. The mission should clearly emphasize observations and integration as well as highlight the additional benefits of IOOS. IOOS is in the business of producing data and enhancing integration. The mission should also encompass forecasting capabilities and the cost-effectiveness gained from leveraging. It was also important to highlight the economic benefits and support for informed decision-making. IOOS is doing more than just integrating, we are leading efforts to advance technology.
**Proposed mission statements (draft)**

A summary of the aims and values of the IOOS Enterprise.

1. Lead the generation and integration of high quality ocean and coastal information to enable sound decision-making and risk management that works for businesses, communities, and people.
2. Lead the production, integration, and communication of high-quality information to ensure safety and promote economic growth and stewardship of our ocean and coasts.
3. Lead ocean, coastal and Great Lakes observing to maximize products to inform decision-making.
4. Lead the integration of coastal and ocean observations to benefit economy, environment, and society.

**Consideration of Guiding Principles and Core Capabilities Breakout Session**

**Overview: Guiding principles and core capabilities**

Participants worked in breakout groups to develop guiding principles and core capabilities on behalf of the U.S. IOOS Enterprise. Examples of guiding principles from the National Park Service were provided. U.S. IOOS Core Capabilities that were developed during the U.S. IOOS Summit (2012) were also provided as examples of core capabilities. Participants were asked to consider the core beliefs or guiding principles that underlie IOOS’ work and to identify those principals and capabilities that are essential to IOOS and therefore must be sustained in the future. Participants were also charged with identifying what IOOS does best and which of these activities is of the greatest service to society.

**Guiding principles discussion**

There was fast agreement among participants that IOOS’ commitment to scientific excellence, data quality, and information sharing represent central beliefs of the U.S. IOOS Enterprise. Collaboration and partnership are principles that must be strengthened in the future. Meaningful partnerships should promote collaboration across multiple levels of government (federal, state, and, and local), regions (RAs and other regional entities), and with the private sector, building efficiencies and providing ocean observing capabilities to the Nation.

**Proposed guiding principles (draft)**

What are the core beliefs or guiding principles that underlie our work and are central to who we are moving forward?
• Productive public-private partnerships support sustained observations and data sharing through facilitated leveraging and buy-in
• Responsible data stewardship preserves and enhances the value of information now and in the future
• Open exchange of information accelerates scientific advancement by building upon research and promoting efficiencies
• Science and technology excellence benefits society and inspires innovation
• High quality, reliable observations coupled with user-friendly tools support societal solutions
• User driven products enhance the societal benefit of ocean and coastal information gathering
• Diverse and evolving stakeholder needs require a nimble, responsive system
• Coordination of information gathering produces cost-effective, efficient sustained observation networks
• User-driven, high-quality information products help protect lives and livelihoods.
• Move from platform-based to systems-based observing networks
• Policy neutral, science driven decision making products and tools enhance decision-making

Core capabilities discussion
Participants agreed that the core capabilities developed during the U.S. IOOS Summit (2012) should be incorporated into the new U.S. IOOS Enterprise Strategic Plan (2018-22).

Proposed core capabilities (draft)
What does IOOS do best/is of greatest service that is important to preserve in the future?

USER-DRIVEN
• Identify and prioritize ocean and coastal information needs and decision-making tools

RESPONSIVE TO STAKEHOLDERS
• Respond to emerging stakeholder challenges and needs through regional evaluation and national revision
• Maintain product utility over time through continual engagement, assessment, and reprioritization

SUSTAINED OBSERVATIONS
• Sustain reliable observations integrated across networks

DATA MANAGEMENT
• Data amplifier: Measure once - use multiple times.
• Information infrastructure to improve data standards and interoperability.
FACILITATE COLLABORATION

- Consortium and consortia: Balance, coordinate, and facilitate regional, national, and international partnerships

TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION

- Respond to emerging data and observing needs through technological advancement

COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

- Translate ocean and coastal information to the public and policymakers
- Build a workforce to support the future ocean economy

SCIENTIFIC EXCELLENCE

- Utilize regional, national, and international scientific and technical expertise to deliver dependable, actionable information