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The Honorable Dr. Kathryn Sullivan
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Herbert C. Hoover Building, Room 6811
14th 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 report, “Review of the NOAA Policy on Partnerships in the Provision of Environmental Information”. The SAB approved this report at its January 28, 2016 meeting.

The SAB’s Environmental Information Services Working Group (EISWG) conducted this review of the NOAA policy on partnerships, identified recommendations, and developed this report. The goal of the review report is to provide NOAA with clear recommendations for updating and improving the Policy, making it more relevant to today’s quickly evolving and expanding environmental information marketplace. It addresses the importance of the Policy’s implementation across NOAA. In addition, this review recognizes that the Policy, which up to this point is not well known or understood outside the traditional weather sector, could serve as a model for other Federal agencies.

Major review recommendations to NOAA include:

1. Expand the current policy beyond the “provision” of environmental information to include “acquisition and creation,” thus changing the focus and title to NOAA Partnership in Support of Environmental Information and Services;
2. Clarify the ambiguity throughout the Policy regarding the use of “information” versus “information services”;
3. Establish a sustained and consistent effort to ensure that NOAA employees, especially those in leadership positions, are knowledgeable on the intent, provisions and implementation of the Policy;
4. Define and communicate key terms in the Policy; and
5. Establish the proposed NOAA-wide Environmental Information Services Committee (EISC) to serve as the lead internal entity to address conflicts and disagreements within NOAA and with non-NOAA entities, guide the Policy’s implementation, and oversee agency-wide awareness and training around the Policy.

In addition to the five major recommendations, the report also includes other issues for NOAA to consider in its development of an updated partnership policy:

- There should be equity among sub-classes of the private sector. In the private sector there are two major subclasses—end users and value-added resellers.
- NOAA Line Offices should develop updated implementation guidelines that use a common format and protocol and publish them online.
- There should be a clear and concise statement of intent in the policy.

- NOAA should continue not to set hard and fast boundaries between sectors and be flexible enough to address new issues as they arise.
- NOAA should establish Tiers of Service: regulatory tier; policy and practice tier and discretionary tiers.
- The policy should reference specific types of NOAA agreements and address potential ambiguity with Circular A-130, which prohibits exclusionary arrangements. It should recognize costs to end-users, explicitly identify costs for services and charge equitably for those services which have changed since policy developed in 2006.
- NOAA should update the policy's reference to NOAA's mission goals and the policy's description of the roles and responsibilities of the three sectors.

The SAB encourages NOAA to consider incorporating these recommendations into its plans for revision of its *Policy on Partnerships in the Provision of Environmental Information*. The SAB respectfully requests a response from NOAA to these recommendations by the Fall 2016 SAB meeting. Please let me know if you have any questions, comments or concerns.

Sincerely,



Lynn Scarlett
Chair, NOAA Science Advisory Board
Managing Director for Public Policy, The Nature Conservancy

Attachment

- cc: Bob Winokur
Walter Dabberdt
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