

JSOST Town Hall on the Ocean Research Priorities Plan
Oceans 2006
Boston, MA
September 19, 2006

The town hall meeting at Oceans 2006 was sparsely attended, but people had good questions. Most of the attendees were from industry. A number of people said that they had looked at the ORPP.

Does the Natural Resources section include energy use and extraction of energy from the ocean?

It is not explicitly called out, but the Department of Energy was happy with the text. It is meant to be included.

Why are human-induced hazards, such as oil spills and groundings, not included in the hazards section? Why is it limited to natural hazards?

Those types of things are captured in Marine Operations or Ecosystem Health. The audience was reminded that the Ocean Research Priorities Plan (ORPP) will not include everything that is being done in ocean research.

Was weather left out intentionally?

Weather appears in several places, but note that only two or three Federal agencies deal with weather. Climate is a much broader priority among the agencies.

How will the Implementation Strategy and the 21 priorities relate to the US Commission on Ocean Policy call for a large increase in funding for ocean research?

Unless we agree on research priorities, there is no hope at all for more money. Without consensus, there are only the individual agency mandates, which may not be in agreement. Currently, the budget is very constrained, but it will not always be that way. There are rewards, however, for communities that come together.

The ORPP can be used in three ways: 1) It identifies the priorities in ocean research; 2) if there are cuts in money available for ocean research, then it is clear what priorities should receive money; 3) if more money becomes available, then it is clear where to add money.

There is an opportunity to have a consistent message between agencies. The ORPP should have a life of five to ten years. Agencies are currently planning the first budget of the new administration and there will be hearings on this document. It will be used to plan out-year budgets. The consensus of priorities will also leverage resources outside of the Federal government.

There has been discussion of a framework for implementation [the Implementation Strategy], will there be a plan for implementation?

There will not be a single implementation plan. The Implementation Strategy should provide guidance to the individual agencies' implementation plans. There could be a Federal interagency document, but the federal agencies cannot tell the states how to implement the ORPP since it is a national plan.

This is the Implementation Strategy for ocean research. What about operations? How do we get there?

Start with the requirements and look at the ORRP for connections. Have a dialog with the research community. The transition from research to operations will be handled differently at different agencies. On the resource management side, SIMOR is working on this and has a work plan in place. SIMOR also established the Federal State Task Team to serve as a connection to resource managers. Their input has been extremely valuable.

It is easy to focus on the types of research that should be done. No research has been done on how an Integrated Ocean Observing System would be useful or into how data and information are used.

Some research has been done, but more research should be done on the impacts of integrated systems and the human element. The priorities in the ORPP are more at the 30,000 foot level.

Metrics were mentioned in the cross-cutting themes section. There needs to be research into systems where having meaningful metrics is critical. People don't often take metrics seriously.

We looked to the Climate Change Science Program study on appropriate metrics for a research program. Measures of effectiveness are better than just measuring something.

When you talk about modeling, there is no discussion of visualization, which is critical for public outreach and understanding.

There was some discussion of visualization in an earlier version and it may have been lost. It was noted that there are a lot of grand challenges, but not all of them have a lot of research elements. This may need to be re-examined.