

SANCTUARY ADVISORY COUNCIL



September 23, 2013

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Brady Scott, Vice-Chair
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Dept. of Natural Resources
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Olympic National Park
U.S. Coast Guard
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
U.S. Geological Survey
U.S. Navy

Artwork: David Sones

Dear Superintendent Bernthal:

Thank you for the staff briefing on the current status of Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary (OCNMS or sanctuary) marine operations. The history of the OCNMS *RV Tatoosh*, contracted cruises and NOAA Ship support was very informative and critical to our understanding of NOAA's ability to more effectively manage the sanctuary.

The OCNMS Advisory Council (AC) is concerned with the material condition of the sanctuary's research vessel *Tatoosh*, and its continued ability to consistently and safely carry out planned sanctuary operations. Especially because the *RV Tatoosh* is five years past its estimated replacement date (Small Boat Requirement Study-2006). Exacerbating this issue is the reduced level of NOAA Ship support; OCNMS has not received ship support in three years. This combination has the potential to severely reduce the sanctuary's ability to fulfill its responsibility and to implement the 2011 management plan, which the AC helped draft and fully supports.

We are especially concerned about NOAA's ability to support new initiatives that have been prioritized by the AC, such as ocean acidification monitoring and the development of OCNMS as a sentinel site. In addition to not being able to make progress in these important areas without adequate resources, we believe that OCNMS is at risk of losing ground on the progress made in areas of oceanographic monitoring, habitat mapping and ecosystem characterization.

We request that you pass on this concern to Office of National Marine Sanctuary and NOAA management as appropriate, along with our support for the acquisition of a replacement vessel for the *RV Tatoosh* and the resources needed to crew and run the vessel. Specifically we request that when funding becomes available that OCNMS be

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prioritized for a new vessel as called for in ONMS's own planning documents. We also request that if the needed funding is not forthcoming that the requisite resources be made available to keep the *RV Tatoosh* safe and operational. The AC recognizes the significance of having a dedicated research asset on the Olympic Coast, as well as the value of NOAA support in providing support from the larger NOAA fleet. As we face challenges from changing ocean conditions it becomes more important than ever, to citizens of the United States, Washington State and the Coastal Treaty Tribes, that NOAA continue to support OCNMS's role in protecting the resources of the Olympic Coast.

As the OCNMS AC, we represent a diverse group of constituencies that have a strong interest in sanctuary and marine resource management in the Olympic Coast region. Our role is to advise the OCNMS Superintendent on sanctuary management topics and concerns. We volunteer our time to assist OCNMS in maintaining a transparent, interdisciplinary, and comprehensive management structure for the sanctuary.

The council is an advisory board to the Sanctuary Superintendent. The opinions and findings of this letter do not necessarily reflect the position of Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Sincerely,



Myles (Chip) Boothe
Chair, Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council