

**(4) Interagency Ocean Observation Committee**

The term “Interagency Ocean Observation Committee” means the committee established under section 3603(c)(2) of this title.

**(5) Non-Federal assets**

The term “non-Federal assets” means all relevant coastal and ocean observation technologies, related basic and applied technology research and development, and public education and outreach programs that are integrated into the System and are managed through States, regional organizations, universities, nongovernmental organizations, or the private sector.

**(6) Regional information coordination entities****(A) In general**

The term “regional information coordination entity” means an organizational body that is certified or established by contract or memorandum by the lead Federal agency designated in section 3603(c)(3) of this title and coordinates State, Federal, local, and private interests at a regional level with the responsibility of engaging the private and public sectors in designing, operating, and improving regional coastal and ocean observing systems in order to ensure the provision of data and information that meet the needs of user groups from the respective regions.

**(B) Certain included associations**

The term “regional information coordination entity” includes regional associations described in the System Plan.

**(7) Secretary**

The term “Secretary” means the Secretary of Commerce, acting through the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

**(8) System**

The term “System” means the National Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observation System established under section 3603 of this title.

**(9) System Plan**

The term “System Plan” means the plan contained in the document entitled “Ocean. US Publication No. 9, The First Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) Development Plan”, as updated by the Council under this chapter.

(Pub. L. 111–11, title XII, § 12303, Mar. 30, 2009, 123 Stat. 1428.)

**§ 3603. Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observing System****(a) Establishment**

The President, acting through the Council, shall establish a National Integrated Coastal and Ocean Observing System to fulfill the purposes set forth in section 3601 of this title and the System Plan and to fulfill the Nation’s international obligations to contribute to the Global Earth Observation System of Systems and the Global Ocean Observing System.

**(b) System elements****(1) In general**

In order to fulfill the purposes of this chapter, the System shall be national in scope and consist of—

(A) Federal assets to fulfill national and international observation missions and priorities;

(B) non-Federal assets, including a network of regional information coordination entities identified under subsection (c)(4), to fulfill regional observation missions and priorities;

(C) data management, communication, and modeling systems for the timely integration and dissemination of data and information products from the System;

(D) a research and development program conducted under the guidance of the Council, consisting of—

(i) basic and applied research and technology development to improve understanding of coastal and ocean systems and their relationships to human activities and to ensure improvement of operational assets and products, including related infrastructure, observing technologies, and information and data processing and management technologies; and

(ii) large scale computing resources and research to advance modeling of coastal and ocean processes.

**(2) Enhancing administration and management**

The head of each Federal agency that has administrative jurisdiction over a Federal asset shall support the purposes of this chapter and may take appropriate actions to enhance internal agency administration and management to better support, integrate, finance, and utilize observation data, products, and services developed under this section to further its own agency mission and responsibilities.

**(3) Availability of data**

The head of each Federal agency that has administrative jurisdiction over a Federal asset shall make available data that are produced by that asset and that are not otherwise restricted for integration, management, and dissemination by the System.

**(4) Non-Federal assets**

Non-Federal assets shall be coordinated, as appropriate, by the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee or by regional information coordination entities.

**(c) Policy oversight, administration, and regional coordination****(1) Council functions**

The Council shall serve as the policy and coordination oversight body for all aspects of the System. In carrying out its responsibilities under this chapter, the Council shall—

(A) approve and adopt comprehensive System budgets developed and maintained by the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee to support System operations, including operations of both Federal and non-Federal assets;

(B) ensure coordination of the System with other domestic and international earth observing activities including the Global Ocean Observing System and the Global Earth Observing System of Systems, and provide, as appropriate, support for and representation on United States delegations to international meetings on coastal and ocean observing programs; and

(C) encourage coordinated intramural and extramural research and technology development, and a process to transition developing technology and methods into operations of the System.

**(2) Interagency Ocean Observation Committee**

The Council shall establish or designate an Interagency Ocean Observation Committee which shall—

(A) prepare annual and long-term plans for consideration and approval by the Council for the integrated design, operation, maintenance, enhancement and expansion of the System to meet the objectives of this chapter and the System Plan;

(B) develop and transmit to Congress at the time of submission of the President's annual budget request an annual coordinated, comprehensive budget to operate all elements of the System identified in subsection (b), and to ensure continuity of data streams from Federal and non-Federal assets;

(C) establish required observation data variables to be gathered by both Federal and non-Federal assets and identify, in consultation with regional information coordination entities, priorities for System observations;

(D) establish protocols and standards for System data processing, management, and communication;

(E) develop contract certification standards and compliance procedures for all non-Federal assets, including regional information coordination entities, to establish eligibility for integration into the System and to ensure compliance with all applicable standards and protocols established by the Council, and ensure that regional observations are integrated into the System on a sustained basis;

(F) identify gaps in observation coverage or needs for capital improvements of both Federal assets and non-Federal assets;

(G) subject to the availability of appropriations, establish through one or more participating Federal agencies, in consultation with the System advisory committee established under subsection (d), a competitive matching grant or other programs—

(i) to promote intramural and extramural research and development of new, innovative, and emerging observation technologies including testing and field trials; and

(ii) to facilitate the migration of new, innovative, and emerging scientific and technological advances from research and development to operational deployment;

(H) periodically review and recommend to the Council, in consultation with the Administrator, revisions to the System Plan;

(I) ensure collaboration among Federal agencies participating in the activities of the Committee; and

(J) perform such additional duties as the Council may delegate.

**(3) Lead Federal agency**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration shall function as the lead Federal agency for the implementation and administration of the System, in consultation with the Council, the Interagency Ocean Observation Committee, other Federal agencies that maintain portions of the System, and the regional information coordination entities, and shall—

(A) establish an Integrated Ocean Observing Program Office within the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration utilizing to the extent necessary, personnel from member agencies participating on the Interagency Ocean Observation Committee, to oversee daily operations and coordination of the System;

(B) implement policies, protocols, and standards approved by the Council and delegated by the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee;

(C) promulgate program guidelines to certify and integrate non-Federal assets, including regional information coordination entities, into the System to provide regional coastal and ocean observation data that meet the needs of user groups from the respective regions;

(D) have the authority to enter into and oversee contracts, leases, grants or cooperative agreements with non-Federal assets, including regional information coordination entities, to support the purposes of this chapter on such terms as the Administrator deems appropriate;

(E) implement a merit-based, competitive funding process to support non-Federal assets, including the development and maintenance of a network of regional information coordination entities, and develop and implement a process for the periodic review and evaluation of all non-Federal assets, including regional information coordination entities;

(F) provide opportunities for competitive contracts and grants for demonstration projects to design, develop, integrate, deploy, and support components of the System;

(G) establish efficient and effective administrative procedures for allocation of funds among contractors, grantees, and non-Federal assets, including regional information coordination entities in a timely manner, and contingent on appropriations according to the budget adopted by the Council;

(H) develop and implement a process for the periodic review and evaluation of regional information coordination entities;

(I) formulate an annual process by which gaps in observation coverage or needs for capital improvements of Federal assets and non-Federal assets of the System are identified by the regional information coordination entities, the Administrator, or other

members of the System and transmitted to the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee;

(J) develop and be responsible for a data management and communication system, in accordance with standards and protocols established by the Council, by which all data collected by the System regarding ocean and coastal waters of the United States including the Great Lakes, are processed, stored, integrated, and made available to all end-user communities;

(K) implement a program of public education and outreach to improve public awareness of global climate change and effects on the ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes environment;

(L) report annually to the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee on the accomplishments, operational needs, and performance of the System to contribute to the annual and long-term plans developed pursuant to subsection (c)(2)(A)(i);<sup>1</sup> and

(M) develop a plan to efficiently integrate into the System new, innovative, or emerging technologies that have been demonstrated to be useful to the System and which will fulfill the purposes of this chapter and the System Plan.

#### **(4) Regional information coordination entities**

##### **(A) In general**

To be certified or established under this chapter, a regional information coordination entity shall be certified or established by contract or agreement by the Administrator, and shall agree to meet the certification standards and compliance procedure guidelines issued by the Administrator and information needs of user groups in the region while adhering to national standards and shall—

(i) demonstrate an organizational structure capable of gathering required System observation data, supporting and integrating all aspects of coastal and ocean observing and information programs within a region and that reflects the needs of State and local governments, commercial interests, and other users and beneficiaries of the System and other requirements specified under this chapter and the System Plan;

(ii) identify gaps in observation coverage needs for capital improvements of Federal assets and non-Federal assets of the System, or other recommendations to assist in the development of the annual and long-term plans created pursuant to subsection (c)(2)(A)(i)<sup>1</sup> and transmit such information to the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee via the Program Office;

(iii) develop and operate under a strategic operational plan that will ensure the efficient and effective administration of programs and assets to support daily data observations for integration into the System, pursuant to the standards approved by the Council;

(iv) work cooperatively with governmental and non-governmental entities at all levels to identify and provide information products of the System for multiple users within the service area of the regional information coordination entities; and

(v) comply with all financial oversight requirements established by the Administrator, including requirements relating to audits.

#### **(B) Participation**

For the purposes of this chapter, employees of Federal agencies may participate in the functions of the regional information coordination entities.

#### **(d) System advisory committee**

##### **(1) In general**

The Administrator shall establish or designate a System advisory committee, which shall provide advice as may be requested by the Administrator or the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee.

##### **(2) Purpose**

The purpose of the System advisory committee is to advise the Administrator and the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee on—

(A) administration, operation, management, and maintenance of the System, including integration of Federal and non-Federal assets and data management and communication aspects of the System, and fulfillment of the purposes set forth in section 3601 of this title;

(B) expansion and periodic modernization and upgrade of technology components of the System;

(C) identification of end-user communities, their needs for information provided by the System, and the System's effectiveness in disseminating information to end-user communities and the general public; and

(D) any other purpose identified by the Administrator or the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee.

##### **(3) Members**

###### **(A) In general**

The System advisory committee shall be composed of members appointed by the Administrator. Members shall be qualified by education, training, and experience to evaluate scientific and technical information related to the design, operation, maintenance, or use of the System, or use of data products provided through the System.

###### **(B) Terms of service**

Members shall be appointed for 3-year terms, renewable once. A vacancy appointment shall be for the remainder of the unexpired term of the vacancy, and an individual so appointed may subsequently be appointed for 2 full 3-year terms if the remainder of the unexpired term is less than 1 year.

###### **(C) Chairperson**

The Administrator shall designate a chairperson from among the members of the System advisory committee.

<sup>1</sup> So in original. Subsec. (c)(2)(A) does not contain a cl. (i).

**(D) Appointment**

Members of the System advisory committee shall be appointed as special Government employees for purposes of section 202(a) of title 18.

**(4) Administrative provisions****(A) Reporting**

The System advisory committee shall report to the Administrator and the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee, as appropriate.

**(B) Administrative support**

The Administrator shall provide administrative support to the System advisory committee.

**(C) Meetings**

The System advisory committee shall meet at least once each year, and at other times at the call of the Administrator, the Interagency Ocean Observing Committee, or the chairperson.

**(D) Compensation and expenses**

Members of the System advisory committee shall not be compensated for service on that Committee, but may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in accordance with subchapter I of chapter 57 of title 5.

**(E) Expiration**

Section 14 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (5 U.S.C. App.) shall not apply to the System advisory committee.

**(e) Civil liability**

For purposes of determining liability arising from the dissemination and use of observation data gathered pursuant to this section, any non-Federal asset or regional information coordination entity incorporated into the System by contract, lease, grant, or cooperative agreement under subsection (c)(3)(D) that is participating in the System shall be considered to be part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Any employee of such a non-Federal asset or regional information coordination entity, while operating within the scope of his or her employment in carrying out the purposes of this chapter, with respect to tort liability, is deemed to be an employee of the Federal Government.

**(f) Limitation**

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to invalidate existing certifications, contracts, or agreements between regional information coordination entities and other elements of the System.

(Pub. L. 111–11, title XII, §12304, Mar. 30, 2009, 123 Stat. 1429.)

## REFERENCES IN TEXT

Section 14 of the Federal Advisory Committee Act, referred to in subsec. (d)(4)(E), is section 14 of Pub. L. 92–463, which is set out in the Appendix to Title 5, Government Organization and Employees.

**§ 3604. Interagency financing and agreements****(a) In general**

To carry out interagency activities under this chapter, the Secretary of Commerce may exe-

cute cooperative agreements, or any other agreements, with, and receive and expend funds made available by, any State or subdivision thereof, any Federal agency, or any public or private organization, or individual.

**(b) Reciprocity**

Member Departments and agencies of the Council shall have the authority to create, support, and maintain joint centers, and to enter into and perform such contracts, leases, grants, and cooperative agreements as may be necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter and fulfillment of the System Plan.

(Pub. L. 111–11, title XII, §12305, Mar. 30, 2009, 123 Stat. 1434.)

**§ 3605. Application with other laws**

Nothing in this chapter supersedes or limits the authority of any agency to carry out its responsibilities and missions under other laws.

(Pub. L. 111–11, title XII, §12306, Mar. 30, 2009, 123 Stat. 1435.)

**§ 3606. Report to Congress****(a) Requirement**

Not later than 2 years after March 30, 2009, and every 2 years thereafter, the Administrator shall prepare and the President acting through the Council shall approve and transmit to the Congress a report on progress made in implementing this chapter.

**(b) Contents**

The report shall include—

(1) a description of activities carried out under this chapter and the System Plan;

(2) an evaluation of the effectiveness of the System, including an evaluation of progress made by the Council to achieve the goals identified under the System Plan;

(3) identification of Federal and non-Federal assets as determined by the Council that have been integrated into the System, including assets essential to the gathering of required observation data variables necessary to meet the respective missions of Council agencies;

(4) a review of procurements, planned or initiated, by each Council agency to enhance, expand, or modernize the observation capabilities and data products provided by the System, including data management and communication subsystems;

(5) an assessment regarding activities to integrate Federal and non-Federal assets, nationally and on the regional level, and discussion of the performance and effectiveness of regional information coordination entities to coordinate regional observation operations;

(6) a description of benefits of the program to users of data products resulting from the System (including the general public, industries, scientists, resource managers, emergency responders, policy makers, and educators);

(7) recommendations concerning—

(A) modifications to the System; and

(B) funding levels for the System in subsequent fiscal years; and

(8) the results of a periodic external independent programmatic audit of the System.