

ocean science organizations, and shall make available undersea research facilities, equipment, technologies, information, and expertise to support undersea research efforts by these organizations;

(2) enter into partnerships, as appropriate and using existing authorities, with the private sector to achieve the goals of the program and to promote technological advancement of the marine industry; and

(3) coordinate the development of agency budgets and identify the items in their annual budget that support the activities described in paragraphs (1) and (2).

(Pub. L. 111-11, title XII, § 12103, Mar. 30, 2009, 123 Stat. 1419.)

§ 3423. Administrative structure

(a) In general

The program shall be conducted through a national headquarters, a network of extramural regional undersea research centers that represent all relevant National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration regions, and the National Institute for Undersea Science and Technology.

(b) Direction

The Director shall develop the overall direction of the program in coordination with a Council of Center Directors comprised of the directors of the extramural regional centers and the National Institute for Undersea Science and Technology. The Director shall publish a draft program direction document not later than 1 year after March 30, 2009, in the Federal Register for a public comment period of not less than 120 days. The Director shall publish a final program direction, including responses to the comments received during the public comment period, in the Federal Register within 90 days after the close of the comment period. The program director shall update the program direction, with opportunity for public comment, at least every 5 years.

(Pub. L. 111-11, title XII, § 12104, Mar. 30, 2009, 123 Stat. 1419.)

§ 3424. Research, exploration, education, and technology programs

(a) In general

The following research, exploration, education, and technology programs shall be conducted through the network of regional centers and the National Institute for Undersea Science and Technology:

(1) Core research and exploration based on national and regional undersea research priorities.

(2) Advanced undersea technology development to support the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's research mission and programs.

(3) Undersea science-based education and outreach programs to enrich ocean science education and public awareness of the oceans and Great Lakes.

(4) Development, testing, and transition of advanced undersea technology associated with ocean observatories, submersibles, advanced

diving technologies, remotely operated vehicles, autonomous underwater vehicles, and new sampling and sensing technologies.

(5) Discovery, study, and development of natural resources and products from ocean, coastal, and aquatic systems.

(b) Operations

The Director of the program, through operation of the extramural regional centers and the National Institute for Undersea Science and Technology, shall leverage partnerships and cooperative research with academia and private industry.

(Pub. L. 111-11, title XII, § 12105, Mar. 30, 2009, 123 Stat. 1420.)

§ 3425. Competitiveness

(a) Discretionary fund

The Program shall allocate no more than 10 percent of its annual budget to a discretionary fund that may be used only for program administration and priority undersea research projects identified by the Director but not covered by funding available from centers.

(b) Competitive selection

The Administrator shall conduct an initial competition to select the regional centers that will participate in the program 90 days after the publication of the final program direction under section 3423 of this title and every 5 years thereafter. Funding for projects conducted through the regional centers shall be awarded through a competitive, merit-reviewed process on the basis of their relevance to the goals of the program and their technical feasibility.

(Pub. L. 111-11, title XII, § 12106, Mar. 30, 2009, 123 Stat. 1420.)

§ 3426. Authorization of appropriations

There are authorized to be appropriated to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration—

(1) for fiscal year 2009—

(A) \$13,750,000 for the regional centers, of which 50 percent shall be for West Coast regional centers and 50 percent shall be for East Coast regional centers; and

(B) \$5,500,000 for the National Technology Institute;

(2) for fiscal year 2010—

(A) \$15,125,000 for the regional centers, of which 50 percent shall be for West Coast regional centers and 50 percent shall be for East Coast regional centers; and

(B) \$6,050,000 for the National Technology Institute;

(3) for fiscal year 2011—

(A) \$16,638,000 for the regional centers, of which 50 percent shall be for West Coast regional centers and 50 percent shall be for East Coast regional centers; and

(B) \$6,655,000 for the National Technology Institute;

(4) for fiscal year 2012—

(A) \$18,301,000 for the regional centers, of which 50 percent shall be for West Coast re-