

Implementing an Integrated Ocean Observing System for the United States: Status and Plans

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Abstract: Congress has expressed support for the establishment of a sustained and Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) and has requested an implementation plan as part of the President's annual budget. The plan is to, "at a minimum (1) include an interagency governance structure; (2) define the roles and responsibilities of each agency in implementing and operating the system; (3) provide multi-year funding estimates by agency; and (4) include a process for regional coordination and technical support to ensure development of integrated regional systems with a national observing initiative." Ocean.US, the National Office for Integrated and Sustained Ocean Observations, has been charged by the National Ocean Research Leadership Council to formulate an implementation plan that responds to these mandates. The plan consists of three parts: (I) Purpose and Governance, (II) The Initial IOOS: Building on Existing Assets, and (III) Improving the IOOS: Enhancements and New Initiatives. Part I, II, and III address items (1) and (4), (2) and (3, short-term), and (3, long-term), respectively.

Part I focuses on the process by which priorities and budgets can be established to implement and improve a sustained and integrated system; Part II describes the initial IOOS that is to be built by linking existing assets across agencies to form an integrated system of measurements, data management and communications, analysis, and education; and Part III focuses on enhancements to the IOOS and initiatives to improve the initial system. The implementation plan, which will be reviewed and updated annually, reflects the collective recommendations by experts over the last 10 years, including the results of the Ocean.US Workshop (March, 2002) and the Ocean.US Regional Observing Systems Summit (March, 2003); input from the U.S. GOOS Steering Committee, and guidance from government agencies. This report provides an overview of the implementation plan and its status.