



19 November 2014

Letter of Support

Proposal: Health of the Sargasso Sea: *Sargassum* community and pollutant changes over annual to decadal time scales. By K.L.Smith, A.D.Sherman, and C.L.Huffard MBARI

As Chairman of the recently created Sargasso Sea Commission I am very pleased to write in support of this research proposal. The SSC was established to further the mandate of the *Hamilton Declaration on Collaboration for the Conservation of the Sargasso Sea* signed in March this year in Bermuda by the governments of the Azores, Bermuda, Monaco, the UK and the US.

The Hamilton Declaration and the establishment of the new Sargasso Sea Commission is the result of three years' work by the Sargasso Sea Alliance led by the Government of Bermuda. The Specific Mandate of the Commission is to "Exercise a stewardship role for the Sargasso Sea and to keep its health, productivity and resilience under continual review."

The Commission is delighted to see that the project proposers refer specifically to our mandate in their proposal. At our first Meeting in October the Commission developed an outline of its first two year work plan. Our aim is to continue the work of the Sargasso Sea Alliance in seeking to achieve international recognition of the importance of Sargasso Sea ecosystem and to secure a range of protective measures for all or parts of the Sargasso Sea to address key threats.

The Sargasso Sea Commission is not planning to develop an independent scientific research capacity but is extremely keen to develop partnerships with

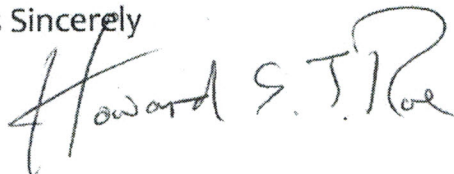
the best of the existing marine science institutions and to support research which assists in achieving our aims.

This proposed project is an excellent fit to our aims. It builds on the earlier work described in Huffard, C.L., S. von Thun, A.D. Sherman, K. Sealey, & K.L. Smith, Jr. "Pelagic *Sargassum* community change over a 40-year period: temporal and spatial variability". (*Marine Biology* in press) which shows that there is variability in time and space within the *Sargassum* communities, which is in itself interesting and important. The proposal is for a continuation of these earlier observations. Expanding the data set of observations will be a valuable contribution and might (or might not) shed light on whether their earlier results were typical of the current status quo. Certainly accumulating more data is helpful to the SSC and perhaps other interested parties as we seek to build up a data base of current (as well as past) observations in the Sargasso Sea.

My fellow Commissioners and I are pleased to support this project, and we look forward to the better understanding of the nature of changes in biodiversity and the implications of these to the health of the Sargasso rafting community which will result. These new data and information will greatly assist our efforts to deliver appropriate conservation measures in this iconic sea.

I very much hope that this proposal is funded,

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Howard S.J. Roe". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'H'.

Howard S.J. Roe

Chair Sargasso Sea Commission; Emeritus Professor University of Southampton