



11 May 2021

The Honorable Roger Wicker  
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
511 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
522 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse  
330 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Brian Schatz  
722 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Wicker, Cantwell, Murkowski, Whitehouse, and Schatz:

On behalf of the American Geophysical Union (AGU) and our community of 130,000 worldwide in the Earth and space sciences, I am writing to thank you for crafting and reintroducing the National Ocean Exploration Act (S.381) and to offer AGU's official endorsement for this important bill.

The National Ocean Exploration Act will help to ensure that our oceans continue to provide resources vital to our lives and our livelihoods—from food and energy sources to weather and global climate modulation, to biologically diverse habitats. Specifically, right now, there are significant gaps in our ability to collect data from our oceans that we need to make sound decisions affecting the nation's economy, security, and environmental health. For example, earlier this year, the Interagency Working Group on Ocean and Coastal Mapping reported that just over half of U.S. waters are still unmapped.<sup>1</sup>

By providing statutory authority for the National Ocean Mapping, Exploration, and Characterization Council, the National Ocean Exploration Act will further solidify the interagency coordination critical to advancing ocean science. In addition, by reauthorizing NOAA's existing

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<sup>1</sup> NOAA Office of Coast Survey (18 March 2021). The Interagency Working Group on Ocean and Coastal Mapping announces progress report on mapping U.S. ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes waters. Retrieved from <https://nauticalcharts.noaa.gov/updates/noaa-announces-progress-report-on-mapping-u-s-ocean-coastal-and-great-lakes-waters/>

Ocean Exploration, Ocean and Coastal Mapping, and Hydrographic Services programs, the bill will ensure these key programs can continue working toward achieve the nation's ocean policy priorities. Finally, by directing the development of an integrated ocean and coastal mapping federal funding match, the bill will create opportunities for strengthened partnerships and cross-sector collaboration that can elevate ocean innovation and discovery.

AGU's members in the ocean sciences, who come from a wide diversity of backgrounds and expertise, are dedicated to understanding processes in marine environments—from the coast to the open ocean and from the sea surface to beneath the seafloor—and to ensure that the science is translated for the public and decisionmakers. As such, AGU members can attest to the fundamental role that ocean mapping, exploration, and characterization play in understanding and preserving our oceans.

Given our strong shared interests on the goals of this legislation, AGU appreciates your leadership and looks forward to working with you on this critical issue in the future.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lexi Shultz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lexi" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Shultz".

Lexi Shultz  
Vice President, Science Policy & Government Relations  
American Geophysical Union