



UNIVERSITY-NATIONAL OCEANOGRAPHIC LABORATORY SYSTEM

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Dear Sea-going Colleague,

As some of you know, the federal agencies had been urged by the Academic Fleet Review (Schmitt et al., 1999) (conducted for the National Science Foundation and approved by the National Science Board in May 1999) to begin the process of long-range planning for the renewal of the fleet. As a result of this report, the Federal agencies, through the Federal Oceanographic Facilities Committee (FOFC), and with input from the academic community (via UNOLS), produced a plan entitled "Charting the Future for the National Academic Research Fleet". Over the next 20 years, the Plan calls for a fleet that is more capable than at present, but that has fewer vessels. In the Plan, four classes of ships, (Global, Ocean, Regional and Local) were used to describe the future fleet. Regional Class ships will continue to work in and near the continental margins and coastal zone, but with improved technology and more science berths than in current, comparably sized vessels.

In the FOFC report, the Regional Class vessels are viewed as key elements of the future academic research fleet for which the Federal Government is planning to provide construction funding. The first Regional vessel to be constructed as part of the Plan is designated to be located in the Gulf of Mexico with additional Regional vessels in the Atlantic and Pacific within ten years.

The Science Mission Requirements (SMRs) and detailed design characteristics of these Regional Class vessels are not explicitly stated in the FOFC report. The report states that:

"Regional Class ships are the smallest vessels for which federal funding is anticipated to be the primary source for construction. There is a projected need for vessels with greater capability than the existing Cape Class vessels to address the science of the inner shelf and coastal environments around the United States. The science mission of these ships is coastal oceanography in the broadest sense. Though range, science complement, and outfitting will be less than that for the larger vessel classes, the new ships in this class should be able to carry approximately 20 scientists for up to a month, and provide suitable laboratory space and instrumentation to allow significant multidisciplinary programs. Their design and outfitting will emphasize the scientific priorities of the shallower, coastal regimes in which they will operate. It is likely they will have the capability to deploy, supervise, and recover autonomous systems."

The Regional Class ship characteristics specified in the FOFC report are:

- Endurance 30 days (21 days)
- Range 15,000 km..... (8,000km/5,000 nm)
- Length 40-55 m..... (< 46 m)
- Science berths 15-20..... (12 – 16 or 24 w/van)

The values in parenthesis are values from the SMRs of the present Class IV research vessels

At this critical time, we need input from you about the capabilities required of the new Regional Class ships. Anyone in the ocean science community with an interest in the future of the research fleet and the Regional Class ships is encouraged to read the posted SMRs and related information located at the UNOLS Web site (http://www.unols.org/fic/regional/regional_class.html) .There is a parallel effort to



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develop SMRs for the Ocean Class vessels as well. A link to the Ocean Class pages is located on the above page.

A workshop is scheduled for August 15 & 16 in Salt Lake City to draft a report that would aid in concept designs. If you are interested in attending, please go to the Registration and Input Form located on the Web page. Attendance may be limited, however whether you plan to attend or not, please respond with constructive comments and answers to the questionnaire on the Web page. Every effort will be made to ensure that those attending the workshop represent a broad range of scientific disciplines, geographic regions and institutions and that input from all interested sea going scientists is considered. Consideration of and an attempt to articulate regional differences will be a part of these workshops. The community will be given an opportunity to review and comment on the outcome of these workshops and any follow on planning activities. Comments would be most helpful if received by July 10, 2002 and we would like to know of your interest in attending the workshop as soon as possible. Please pass this announcement on to your colleagues.

Sincerely,

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