

# NSF Agency Report

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November 8-10, 2006

UNOLS RVTEC Meeting

Corvallis, Oregon

# NSF Budget

- NSF is currently operating under a continuing resolution, as is most of the federal government.
- Appropriation bills are being worked on and may be completed over the next few weeks.
- Most projections, and the 2006 NSF budget request, are within about 3% of flat from fiscal 2005 levels.

# NSF Division of Ocean Sciences Budget

- Due to the very rapid growth in ship operating costs, especially fuel and security, NSF has determined that in order to maintain an adequate base funding for research with little or not overall growth, we must reduce the number of NSF-funded ship operating days in 2006.
- UNOLS ship schedules for 2006 reflect this policy decision, and have about 25% fewer NSF operating days than in 2005. Even this reduction is not firm until all agency budgets are complete, however.

# NSF and UNOLS Changes in 2005-2006

- No NSF personnel changes in Integrative Programs Section in 2005; we plan to add a new position in the facilities group soon, however, to manage environmental impacts on research activities and vice versa.
- Ship changes – R/V Ewing retired, to be replaced by R/V Langseth; R/V Gyre retired; R/V Seward Johnson II moving to Bermuda and R/V Weatherbird II retiring; R/V Alpha Helix laid up all of 2005 & 2006.

# NSF Oceanographic Technical Services Budget

- Since we are acting under a continuing resolution, I do not have a budget plan yet for the Technical Services Program. I anticipate that it will be reduced substantially from 2005, since the number of operating days is down significantly.
- We intend to make a major effort to maintain and improve quality of service despite the weak budget environment.

# NSF Oceanographic Technical Services Budget

- Initiatives designed to address both weak budget and quality improvement include cross-training of technical personnel both within jobs at the same institution and between institutions.
- An expanding initiative to address ship communications, HighSeasNet, should improve technical productivity at sea as well as education and science programs

# NSF Oceanographic Instrumentation Budget

- Funds are likely to be tight for new initiatives. Justification needs to be clear that tools are needed to meet real, urgent, shared-use needs in 2006 or soon thereafter to gain priority.
- We do, nevertheless, intend to continue to modernize the UNOLS pool of shared-use instrumentation, seeking better, more efficient and cost-effective ways to achieve quality scientific results at sea.

# NSF – Overall Message

- It's going to be a tight year, despite less NSF ship usage. We will do our best to help you support the scheduled science, and I will reserve some funds to support training, cross-training, and to try out new, innovative methods to improve quality and efficiency of technical support.
- I understand you have been pressed to do more with less for several years. I will try to help manage expectations to keep them realistic while we push to continue to improve quality in technical support.



# NSF – Activities Regarding Impacts of Sound on Marine Mammals

- My program has for several years had responsibility to support activities related to compliance with environmental regulations that relate to impacts of ship-produced sound, mostly from seismic sources (airguns), on marine mammals (Marine Mammal Protection Act) as well as other endangered and threatened species (Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act).

# Marine Mammals and Sound, Cont'd.

- In 2005 and much of 2006, the principal NSF-funded seismic vessels will not be operating, as R/V Ewing was taken out of service and R/V Langseth is undergoing conversion. This has reduced the number of needed cruise-specific Environmental Assessments, shipboard marine mammal observers and related permits.
- However, we have begun preparing an Environmental Impact Statement for future operations, a time-consuming, costly process lasting into 2007.

# Marine Mammals and Sound, Cont'd.

- We plan to add an Environmental Officer to our Division by the end of 2005 – a position was advertised, and interviews start shortly.
- I hope to introduce this individual to you at the next RVTEC meeting, and return to spending more of my effort working on the core issues of technical services and management of shared-use instruments.