

ad hoc Committee on Alternative Funding Avenues for UNOLS Vessels

A.K.A., the Feasibility of a More Flexible UNOLS to Meet the Needs of Additional Users

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GOAL: Increase usage of UNOLS fleet through non-traditional funding mechanisms

CHARGE: Review the status of alternate funding situations, issues where concerns or problems were raised or encountered, and recommend how UNOLS should proceed



NSF Cooperative Agreement for UNOLS Vessels

The NSF Ship Operations Program funds the operation and maintenance of research vessels used by NSF-funded scientists in proportion to the number of days at sea in support of NSF-funded awards

- must maintain all required licenses and certifications for a research vessel including, but not limited to, those issued by:
 - the United States Coast Guard,
 - the American Bureau of Shipping, and
 - the International Maritime Organization



46 CFR 3.10-1 - "An oceanographic research vessel is a vessel which the U.S. Coast Guard finds is employed exclusively in one or more of the following:

- (a) Oceanographic instruction;
- (b) Limnologic instruction;
- (c) Oceanographic research; or,
- (d) Limnologic research."

Precludes anything that is not research and teaching; i.e., does not include transport of individuals or equipment, does not include use for development (fund raising).



(e) In the event of a change in operating conditions, the owner, master, or agent of the vessel shall advise the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection who issued the designation. After reviewing the pertinent information concerning the operational changes, the Officer in Charge, Marine Inspection, shall determine if the vessel is still eligible to retain its designation as an oceanographic research vessel.



Examples of opportunities/complications:

Seward Johnson from HBOI doing bathymetric work in the Gulf of Mexico, with a complaint from John E. Chance and Associates.

Kilo Moana did work for the German government.

Maurice Ewing, in order to avoid complete lay up, took a year off to do work for BP in the North Sea. Lost its RV designation, which was very difficult to reinstate.

USC vessel used to transport people to Catalina Island. Complaint by a commercial charter, and the vessel lost its RV designation. Web site now has USC transport (official visitors) vs commercial transport.

Marcus Langseth is in negotiation with Pacific Gas & Electric to do work concerning placement of a nuclear power plant. The background data are required by the State of California as a prerequisite to consideration of permit.

Pelican and *F.G. Walton Smith* serve commercial firms in requirements by federal agencies concerning oceanographic data.



However, the USCG provides research vessel designation to many commercial firm vessels, often for work that could be done by UNOLS vessels:

- TDI-Brooks currently operates four research vessels, the RV *GeoExplorer*, RV *Gyre*, RV *Brooks McCall* and RV *JW Powell* and the OSV *Rylan T.*
- Stabbert Maritime operates the *Alpha Helix* with a designation of research vessel.
- RV *White Holly* is available for seismic operations.
- Global Seas owns and operates the RV *Mt. Mitchell*, a seismic vessel.



Drawbacks to UNOLS vessels contracting with commercial vendors:

- Vendors usually want last-minute help or long stretches of time that would tie up the vessel.
- Such scheduling would not work with the UNOLS system.
- The perception that federally-funded vessels compete with private/commercial. Not appreciated by Congressional members.



Advantages to commercial vendors contracting with UNOLS vessels:

- Uniformity of high standards and technological support.
- Excellent safety standards.
- Work with crews that understand oceanographic research and are more capable of supporting the needs of the user.



How to find more work for UNOLS ships, if the “gray” area is problematic:

- Need to do more with agencies, federal and state.
- State agencies are usually connected to research vessels in their respective areas.
- Federal agencies should be more cognizant of the need to utilize the academic fleet, a marketing issue for UNOLS, and agency inertia.
- E.g., recent USGS solicitation for work that would involve an oceanographic research vessel. UNOLS did not find out about this until a deadline was quickly approaching, and only through detailed reading of a commerce bulletin.



- E.g., most of the Trustee-funded NRDA activities during and post-BP Oil Spill are being completed by commercial firms with research vessels, outside of the UNOLS system.
- BP GRI proposals were left to deciding their own mechanism for research vessel time. Some will go to UNOLS vessels, some to UNOLS non-operator institution research vessels, and to commercial vendors with US Coast Guard designated research vessels.



Engage (again and often) with NOAA, USGS, and other federal agencies concerning their support of the academic fleet.

Continual marketing of the capabilities, efficiencies and high standards of the UNOLS academic fleet.

NR, I personally think that UNOLS vessels should be going directly to those with research funding, no matter what the source to try to get them engaged with their vessel. I know this is not in the UNOLS spirit. But, the cooperative model is not the modus operandi for most commercial users and has not engendered agency participation.

