



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations
Marine Operations Center
439 W. York Street
Norfolk, VA 23510-1114

March 22, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR: Commander Eric Johnson, NOAA
Commanding Officer, NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer*

FROM: *FOL* Commander Stephanie Koes, NOAA *[Signature]* *CT/NOAA*
Commanding Officer, NOAA Marine Operations Center-Atlantic

SUBJECT: Project Instruction for EX-18-03

Attached is the final Project Instruction for EX-18-03, Gulf of Mexico (ROV and Mapping), which is scheduled aboard NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer* during the period of April 11 – May 3, 2018. Of the 23 DAS scheduled for this project, 0 DAS are funded by an OMAO allocation, 20 DAS are funded National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science Center (NMFS SEFSC) Allocation, 2 DAS are funded by National Ocean Service (NOS) and 1 DAS funded by Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR). This project is estimated to exhibit a High Operational Tempo. Acknowledge receipt of these instructions via e-mail to deputyops.moa@noaa.gov at Marine Operations Center-Atlantic.





Project Instructions

Date Submitted: March 21th, 2018

Platform: NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer*

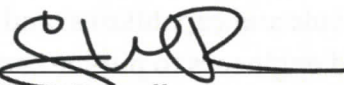
Project Number: EX-18-03

Project Title: Gulf of Mexico (ROV & Mapping)

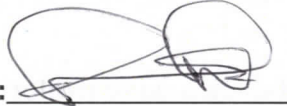
Project Dates: April 11 - May 3, 2018

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 Date: 2018.03.21 15:53:26 -0400 **Dated:** _____

LT Nick Pawlenko
 Expedition Coordinator
 Office of Ocean Exploration & Research

Approved by:  **Dated:** 3/21/2018

Craig Russell
 Program Manager
 Office of Ocean Exploration & Research

Approved by:  LT/NOAA **Dated:** 3/22/18

Commander Stephanie Koes, NOAA
 Commanding Officer
 Marine Operations Center - Atlantic

For

I. Overview

“America’s future depends on understanding the ocean. We explore the ocean because its health and resilience are vital to our economy and to our lives. We depend on the ocean to regulate weather and climate; sustain a diversity of life; for maritime shipping and national defense; and for food, energy, medicine, and other essential services to humankind.”

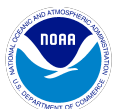
- NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research Strategic Plan

A. Brief Summary and Project Period

This document contains project instructions for EX-18-03. Operations for this cruise will be conducted 24 hours/day and consist of daily remotely operated vehicle (ROV), overnight mapping, and full shore-based participation via telepresence. The expedition will commence on April 11, 2018 in Pascagoula, Mississippi (30° 20.355'N, 88° 34.499'W) and conclude on May 3, 2018 in Key West (24° 33.856'N, 81° 48.007'W). Operations will include the use of the ship’s deep water mapping systems (Kongsberg EM302 multibeam sonar, EK60 split-beam fisheries sonars, Knudsen 3260 chirp sub-bottom profiler sonar, and Teledyne Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler), XBT and CTD casts in support of multibeam sonar mapping operations, OER’s two-body ROV Deep *Discoverer* and *Seirios*, and the ship’s high-bandwidth satellite connection for continuous real-time ship-to-shore communications. Operations are planned in and around the US Gulf of Mexico and potentially the international waters of the Gulf.

NOAA’s Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER) is the only federal organization dedicated to exploring the global ocean. OER works with partners to identify priority areas for exploration; support innovations in exploration tools and capabilities; and encourage the next generation of ocean explorers, scientists, and engineers to pursue careers in ocean exploration and related fields. The data and information collected during our expeditions and the research we fund gives resource managers, the academic community, and the private sector the information they need to identify, understand, and manage ocean resources for this and future generations of Americans.

NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer* is the only U.S. federal vessel dedicated to exploring our largely unknown ocean for the purpose of discovery and the advancement of knowledge. America’s future depends on understanding the ocean. We explore the ocean to make valuable scientific, economic, and cultural discoveries; we explore because ocean health and resilience are vital to our economy and to our lives. Exploration supports NOAA mission priorities and national objectives by providing high-quality scientific information about the deep ocean to anyone who needs it.



In close collaboration with government agencies, academic institutions, and other partners, OER conducts deep-ocean expeditions using advanced technologies on the *Okeanos Explorer*. From mapping and characterizing previously unseen seafloor to collecting and disseminating information about ocean depths, this work helps to establish a foundation of information and to fill data gaps. Data collected on the ship follow federal open-access data standards and are publicly available shortly after an expedition ends. This accessibility ensures the delivery of reliable scientific data needed to identify, understand, and manage key elements of the ocean environment.

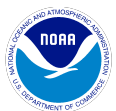
NOAA will work with the scientific and management community to characterize unknown and poorly-known areas of the Gulf of Mexico through telepresence-based exploration. Baseline information collected during this cruise will support and catalyze further exploration, research and management activities.

B. Days at Sea (DAS)

Of the 23 DAS scheduled for this project, 0 DAS are funded by an OMAO allocation, 20 DAS are funded National Marine Fisheries Service, Southeast Fisheries Science Center (NMFS SEFSC) Allocation, 2 DAS are funded by National Ocean Service (NOS) and 1 DAS funded by Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR). This project is estimated to exhibit a High Operational Tempo due to 24-hour operations consisting of daily ROV dives, possible CTD rosette casts, possible small boat operations for personnel transfer, overnight mapping operations and continuous shore-side participation via telepresence.

C. Operating Area

EX-18-03 is a combined ROV and mapping cruise that will focus operations in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico and potentially international waters. Mapping, ROV and CTD rosette operations will focus in depths generally between 250 and 4,500 meters



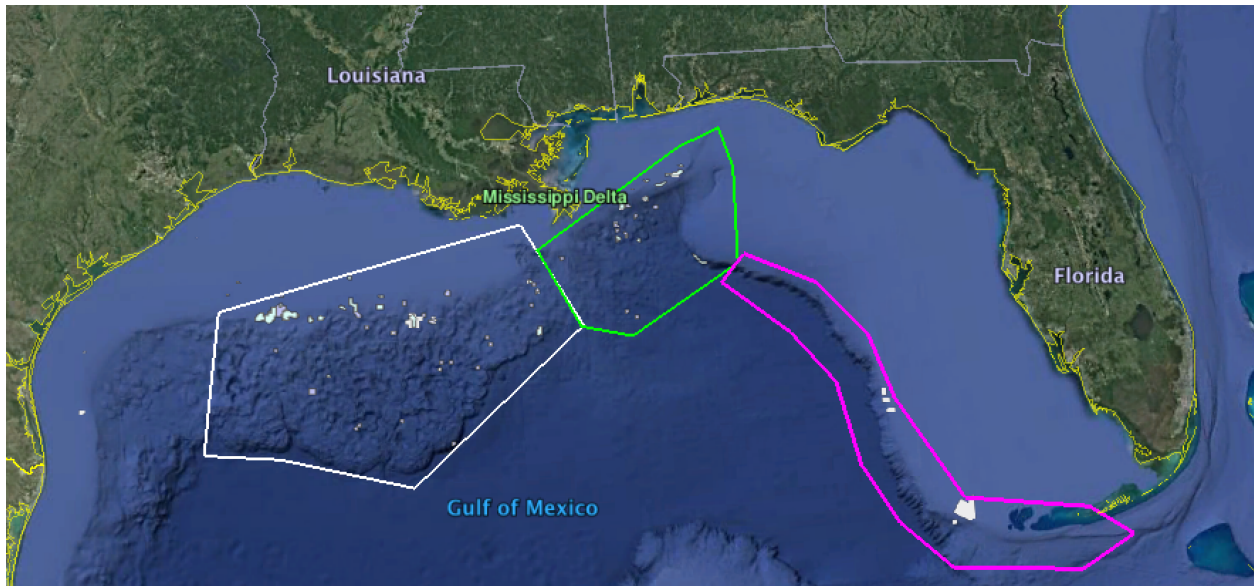


Figure 1: Map showing the general expedition operating area. The white polygon designates the western operations area. The green is the central and the magenta is the eastern operations area. The white and grey shaded polygons are areas of particular interest to the management community will be make up a significant number of the dive sites.

Generalized operating area coordinates		
ID	Latitude	Longitude
SW corner	24° 5.9'N	97° 6.3'W
SE corner	23° 46.4'N	80° 54.7'W
NE corner	30° 11.0'N	86° 50.4'W
NW corner	28° 3.6'N	96° 49.1'W

Table 1: Bounding coordinates of the EX-18-03 operating area

D. Summary of Objectives

April 11 - May 3, 2018 (Pascagoula, MS - Key West, FL) Telepresence-enabled ROV, CTD rosette, and mapping Operations.

EX-18-03 operations will occur in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico. This cruise will collect baseline data and information to support priority NOAA science and management needs including in multiple marine protected areas of the Gulf of Mexico.

Mission objectives for EX-18-03 include a combination of mapping/operational, science, education, outreach, and data management objectives:



1. Science

- a. Acquire data to support priority Sanctuary science and management needs;
- b. Identify and map vulnerable marine habitats – particularly high-density deep-sea coral and sponge communities;
- c. Explore areas relevant to resource managers, such as Essential Fish Habitats (EFH), Habitat Areas of Particular Concern (HAPC), National Marine Sanctuaries and their potential expansion areas;
- d. Explore the diversity and distribution of benthic habitats – including bottom fish habitats and deep-sea coral communities;
 - i. Collect data on: habitat size and extent, animal diversity and density;
 - ii. Focus close-up imaging operations on potential new, rare and poorly documented animals as well as dominant members of the communities;
 - iii. Collect and preserve biological samples of potential new species, new records, dominant community members if not easily recognized, and other animals to aid in site characterization;
 - iv. Investigate biogeographic patterns of deep-sea ecosystems and connectivity across the Gulf of Mexico;
- e. Investigate the geology of the Gulf of Mexico;
- f. Explore U.S. maritime heritage by investigating sonar anomalies and characterizing shipwrecks;
- g. Acquire a foundation of ROV, sonar, and oceanographic data to better understand the characteristics of the water column and the fauna that live there;
- h. Collect high-resolution bathymetry in areas with no (or low quality) sonar data;
- i. Continue to refine specimen processing procedures;
- j. Ground-truth acoustic data using video imagery and characterize associated habitat;
- k. Engage a broad spectrum of the scientific community and public in telepresence-based exploration;
- l. Successfully conduct operations in conjunction with shore-based Exploration Command Centers and remote science team participants;
- m. Create and provide input into standard science products to provide a foundation of publicly accessible data and information products to spur further exploration, research, and management activities;
- n. Follow UCH SOPs as identified in Appendix H;

2. Remote Science/Exploration Command Centers

- a. Provide operational support and training to scientists and managers to enable remote participation in at-sea operations;
- b. Continue to test best practices for hosting internet-1 based live interactions;
- c. Facilitate outreach and engagement activities and events at the ECCs and other facilities that host interactions;



- d. Test and refine ship-to-shore communications procedures that engage multiple ECCs and other remote participants;
 - e. Test and refine operating procedures and products;
 - f. Test operational integration of the new VPN video delivery system;
 - g. Beta test new version of SeaScribe;
3. ROV Engineering
- a. Daytime ROV dives on exploration targets;
 - b. Complete engineering objectives during shakedown ROV dives;
 - c. Ongoing training of pilots;
 - d. Ongoing system maintenance, documentation, and training;
 - e. Continue to refine ROV mid-water exploration procedures
 - f. Follow UCH SOPs as identified in Appendix H;
 - g. Testing of new 6000m rated still camera
4. Video Engineering (VSAT ~15 mb/sec ship-to-shore; 2.5 mb/sec shore-to-ship)
- a. Test terrestrial and high-speed satellite links;
 - b. Support telepresence-enabled ROV operations;
 - c. Collect/create all standard video products;
 - d. Facilitate live outreach events between ship and shore;
 - e. Follow UCH SOPs as identified in Appendix H;
5. Mapping
- a. Collect high resolution mapping data from sonars in priority areas as dictated by operational needs as well as science and management community needs;
 - b. Support ROV operations with mapping products and expertise;
 - c. Conduct mapping operations during transit, with possible further development of exploration targets;
 - d. Collect XBT casts as data quality requires, during mapping operations;
 - e. Create daily standard mapping products;
 - f. Follow UCH SOPs as identified in Appendix H;
 - g. Collect sun photometer measurements as part of survey of opportunity;
6. Data Management
- a. Provide a foundation of publicly accessible data and information products to spur further exploration, research, and management activities;
 - b. Provide daily products to shore for operational decision making purposes;
 - c. Cross train existing ROV dedicated personnel;
 - d. Formalize Data Management SOPs;
 - e. Follow UCH SOPs as identified in Appendix H;
 - f. Continue to work on the GFOE network integration and develop SOPs;

7. Outreach



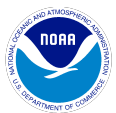
- a. Engage the general public in ocean exploration through live video and timely content (daily updates, topical essays and web logs, highlight videos, video clips, still imagery and mapping products) posted on the Ocean Explorer website;
- b. Host live events and interactions with shore.
- c. More TBD.

8. Ship

- a. Continue training new deck department personnel in ROV launch and recovery;
- b. Develop and maintain proficiency with small boat operations for new and long term crew;
- c. Conduct CTD operations as requested and able;
- d. Aft Conn Training;
- e. Follow UCH SOPs as identified in Appendix H;
- f. Review ROV Emergency Procedures
- g. Additional safety training.

E. Participating Institutions

- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER)–1315 East-West Hwy, Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA
- NOAA, National Oceanographic Data Center, National Coastal Data Development Center, Stennis Space Center MS, 39529 USA
- University Corporation for Atmospheric Research Joint Office for Science Support (JOSS), PO Box 3000 Boulder, CO 80307 USA
- University of New Hampshire (UNH) Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping (CCOM) Jere A. Chase Ocean Engineering Lab, 24 Colovos Rd, Durham, NH 03824 USA
- Global Foundation for Ocean Exploration, P.O. Box 417, Mystic, CT 06355
- NOAA Deep Coral Research and Technology Program, 1401 Constitution Avenue NW, Room 5128 Washington, DC 20230
- NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, 1305 East-West Highway, 11th Floor Silver Spring, MD 20910
- University of Rhode Island Inner Space Center, 215 South Ferry Road Narragansett, RI 02882
- Department of Geosciences, Mississippi State University, P.O. Box 5448 Mississippi State, MS 39762
- Exploratorium, Pier 15 The Embarcadero, San Francisco, CA 94111



F. Personnel (Mission Party)

Table 2: Full list of seagoing mission party members and their affiliations

#	Name (First, Last)	Title	Date Aboard	Date Disembark	Gender	Affiliation	Nationality
1	LTJG Nikolai Pawlenko	Expedition Coordinator	TBD	TBD	M	OER	USA
2	Adam Skarke	Science Lead	TBD	TBD	M	UCAR	USA
3	Daniel Wagner	Science Lead	TBD	TBD	M	DSCRTP	US Permanent Resident
4	Michael White	Mapping Lead	TBD	TBD	M	ERT/ OER	USA
5	Jason Meyer	Mapping Watch lead	TBD	TBD	M	UCAR	USA
6	Lauren Jackson	Sample Data Manager	TBD	TBD	F	NCEI	USA
7	Karl McLetchie	GFOE Operations Manager	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	USA
8	Josh Carlson	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	USA
9	Fernando Aragon	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	Colombian /US Permanent Resident
10	Daniel Rogers	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	USA
11	Jeff Laning	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	USA
12	Robert "Bobby" Mohr	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	USA
13	Andy Lister	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	USA
14	Christopher Ritter	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	USA
15	Don Liberatore	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	USA
16	Tara Smithee	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	F	GFOE	USA
17	Annie White	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	F	GFOE	USA
18	David Casagrande	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	USA
19	Caitlin Bailey	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	F	GFOE	USA
20	Roland Brian	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	USA



21	Bob Knott	Engineering team	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	USA
22	Lars Murphy	Engineering Team	TBD	TBD	M	GFOE	USA

G. Administrative

1. Points of Contact:

Ship Operations

Marine Operations Center, Atlantic (MOA)
439 West York Street
Norfolk, VA 23510-1145
Telephone: (757) 441-6776
Fax: (757) 441-6495

Chief, Operations Division, Atlantic (MOA)
LT Joe Carrier, NOAA
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Email: Chiefops.MOA@noaa.gov

Mission Operations

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Expedition Coordinator
NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research
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CDR Eric Johnson, NOAA
Commanding Officer
NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer*
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Mike White
Mapping Lead
NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (ERT)
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C: (631) 561-9802
Email: Michael.white@noaa.gov

LT Aaron Colohan
Operations Officer
NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer*
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Email: ops.explorer@noaa.gov

Other Mission Contacts

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Program Manager
NOAA Ocean Exploration & Research
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Email: Craig.Russell@noaa.gov

CDR William Mowitt, Deputy Director
NOAA Ocean Exploration & Research
Phone: (301) 734-1023
Email: William.Mowitt@noaa.gov

Alan Leonardi, Director
NOAA Ocean Exploration & Research
Phone: 301-734-1016
Mobile: 202-631-1790
Email: alan.leonardi@noaa.gov

Vessel Shipping Address



**Ocean Exploration
and Research**

1. Shipments

Send an email to the *Okeanos Explorer* Operations Officer at OPS.Explorer@noaa.gov indicating the size and number of items being shipped.

[Contact Name]

NOAA Port Office Pascagoula, MS
NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer*
151 Watts Ave
Pascagoula, MS. 39567

2. Diplomatic Clearances

None required

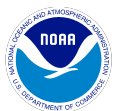
3. Licenses and Permit

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NOAA OER is required to include in its planning and decision-making processes appropriate and careful consideration of the potential environmental consequences of actions it proposes to fund, authorize and/or conduct. NOAA's Administrative Order (NAO) 216-6A Companion Manual describes the agency's specific procedures for NEPA compliance. Among these is the need to review all proposed NOAA-supported field projects for their environmental effects. An Environmental Review Memorandum has been completed for this survey, in accordance with Section 4 of the Companion Manual. This evaluation document memorandum describes all activities that are part of the SouthEast Deep Coral Initiative (SEDCI). (Appendix C).

Informal consultation was initiated under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA), requesting NOAA Fisheries' Protected Resources Division concurrence with our biological evaluation determining that *Okeanos Explorer* operations conducted as part of SEDCI, may affect, but are not likely to adversely affect, ESA-listed marine species. The informal consultation was completed on July 13th 2017 when NOAA NCCOS received a signed letter from the Regional Administrator of South East Regional Office, stating that NMFS concurs with OER's determination that conducting proposed *SEDCI* cruises are not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed marine species (Appendix D).

NCCOS has completed consultation with NOAA's Habitat Conservation Division on potential SEDCI impacts of our operations to Essential Fish Habitat (EFH). They concurred that our operations would not adversely affect EFH provided adherence to our proposed procedures and their guidance stated in the letter (Appendix E).

II. Operations



The Expedition Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the scientific staff are trained in planned operations and are knowledgeable of project objectives, priorities and environmental compliance procedures. The Commanding Officer is responsible for ensuring all operations conform to the ship's accepted practices and procedures.

A. Project Itinerary

All times and dates are subject to prevailing conditions and the discretion of the Commanding Officer. Locations are approximate. Final dive sites will be delivered to the bridge at night for the next day's dive.

Date	Activities
4/07	GFOE personnel arrive. First night in hotel in GPT or move on to ship? Crane support needed to move Seirios into position, unless accomplished at end of EX1802.
4/08	First Day of ROV mobilization. No ship support needed for ROV team. Permission for USBL pings needed all days..
4/09	Mobilization. High voltage and hydraulics needed by ROV team.. Potential afternoon dockside ROV testing.
4/10	Mobilization. High voltage and hydraulics needed by ROV team. Dockside ROV testing. Science team dive planning meeting at 0930 - 1130. Operations and safety brief at 1230 for the mission team, followed by introductory meeting with new personnel.
4/11	Depart Pascagoula, MS
4/12	Dive 1: Engineering Dive
4/13	Dive 2: Engineering Dive
4/14	Dive 3: TBD
4/15	Dive 4: TBD
4/16	Dive 5: TBD
4/17	Dive 6: TBD
4/18	Dive 7: TBD
4/19	Dive 8: TBD
4/20	Dive 9: TBD
4/21	Dive 10: TBD
4/22	Dive 11: TBD
4/23	Dive 12: TBD
4/24	Dive 13: TBD
4/25	Dive 14: TBD
4/26	Dive 15 TBD



4/27	Dive 16: TBD
4/28	Dive 17: TBD
4/29	Dive 18: TBD
4/30	Dive 19: TBD
5/1	Dive 20: TBD
5/2	Dive 21: TBD
5/3	Arrive Key West, FL
5/4	Demobilization: Some mission personnel depart
5/5	Demobilization in Preparation for VIIRS: Some mission personnel depart
5/6	Final Mission Personnel Depart

Table 2: Detailed Cruise Itinerary. This is an approximate itinerary and is subject to change based on community input, survey results, field conditions, and discretion of the CO.

Staging and De-staging.

Standard preparation for ROV expeditions is anticipated, which includes hydraulic use and high voltage operations. We do anticipate needing crane operations to move Serios into position following EX 18-02 and possibly mounting A-frame Block. Crane support will be needed on 4/9 and 4/10 for dockside testing of new cabling and thrusters on ROVs. Full launch and recovery practice can be done if desired by crew.

Standard de-mob for ROV expeditions is anticipated, which may include hydraulic crane use and high voltage operations. In addition to standard demob the ROV Team will also move ROV Serios and may need to other preparation to accommodate space on the fantail for the following VIIRS Expedition.

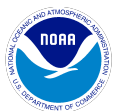
C. Operations to be Conducted

1. Telepresence / Outreach Events

- a. Three live video feeds will be used throughout the cruise to provide situational awareness for onshore personnel.
- b. Exploratorium, San Francisco, CA – Live Interactions
- c. Nature Live event with the Natural History Museum of London.
- d. Additional live events are likely but TBD

2. In-Port Events

- a. No major in port events are planned for this cruise but smaller tours may be arranged TBD



D. SCUBA Dive Plan

All dives are to be conducted in accordance with the requirements and regulations of the [NOAA Diving Program](#) and require the approval of the ship's Commanding Officer. No science dives are planned during EX-18-03, but the ship may plan training, safety drill, or maintenance dives.

E. Applicable Restrictions

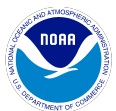
Sonar Operations

EM 302, EK 60, ADCP, and sub-bottom profiler data acquisition is planned for this cruise. All data acquisition will be conducted in accordance with established standard operating procedures under the direction of the mapping team lead. These operating procedures will include protection measures when operating in the vicinity of marine mammals, sea turtles or Endangered Species Act-listed species as described in appendices of this document. The final decision to operate and collect 24-hour sub-bottom profiler data will be at the discretion of the Commanding Officer.

III. Equipment

A. Equipment and capabilities provided by the ship

- Kongsberg Simrad EM302 Multibeam Echosounder (MBES)
- Kongsberg Simrad EK60 Deepwater Echosounders and GPTs (18, 70, 120, 200 kHz)
- Knudsen Chirp 3260 Sub-bottom profiler (SBP)
- Teledyne RDI Workhorse Mariner (300 kHz) ADCP
- Teledyne RDI Ocean Surveyor (38 kHz) ADCP – not operable
- LHM Sippican XBT Mark21 System(Deep Blue probes)
- AOML Automated XBT Launcher (Deep Blue probes)
- Seabird SBE 911Plus CTD
- Seabird SBE 32 Carousel and 24 2.5 L Niskin Bottles
- Light Scattering Sensor (LSS)
- Oxidation – Reduction Potential (ORP)
- Dissolved Oxygen (DO) sensor
- Altimeter Sensor and battery pack
- MarineStar GPS with corrections
- POS/MV
- Seabird SBE-45 (Micro TSG)
- Kongsberg Dynamic Positioning-1 System
- Scientific Computing System (SCS)
- ECDIS
- Met/Wx Sensor Package
- 1 functioning and seaworthy SOLAS approved fast rescue boat
- 1 functioning and seaworthy work boat to support ROV operations and personnel transfers



B. Equipment and capabilities provided by the scientists

- Microtops II Ozone Monitor Sun photometer and handheld GPS required for NASA Marine Aerosols Network supplementary project.
- NOAA OER 6000 m *Deep Discoverer* ROV NOAA *Seirios* Camera Platform (6,000 meter capability)
- IVS Fledermaus Software suite
- SIS Software and Kongsberg acquisition computer
- EK 60 acquisition computer
- Sub bottom profiler acquisition computer
- CTD acquisition computer
- Hypack Software
- GFOE provided VSAT High-Speed link (15 Mbps ship to shore; 5 Mbps shore to ship)
- Backscatter Mosaic computer
- GFOE exploration operations networking infrastructure
- Scientific Computing System (SCS)
- Telepresence System
- NCEI Cruise Information Management System (CIMS)
- GFOE VOIP system
- GFOE provided data storage
- GFOE provided still camera and housing rated to 6000m

IV. Hazardous Materials

A. Policy and Compliance

The Expedition Coordinator is responsible for complying with FEC 07 Hazardous Materials and Hazardous Waste Management Requirements for Visiting Scientific Parties (or the OMAO procedure that supersedes it). The Expedition Coordinator and Science Team Lead will be responsible for transporting all samples and HAZMAT on and off the ship. By Federal regulations and NOAA Marine and Aviation Operations policy, the ship may not sail without a complete inventory of all hazardous materials by name and quantity, MSDS, appropriate spill cleanup materials (neutralizing agents, buffers, or absorbents) in amounts adequate to address spills of a size equal to the amount of chemical brought aboard, and chemical safety and spill response procedures. Documentation regarding those requirements will be provided by the Chief of Operations, Marine Operations Center, upon request.

Per OMAO procedure, the scientific party will include with their project instructions and provide to the CO of the respective ship 30 days before departure:

- List of chemicals by name with anticipated quantity
- List of spill response materials, including neutralizing agents, buffers, and absorbents
- Chemical safety and spill response procedures, such as excerpts of the program's Chemical Hygiene Plan or SOPs relevant for shipboard laboratories



- For bulk quantities of chemicals in excess of 50 gallons total or in containers larger than 10 gallons each, notify ship's Operations Officer regarding quantity, packaging and chemical to verify safe stowage is available as soon as chemical quantities are known.

Upon embarkation and prior to loading hazardous materials aboard the vessel, the scientific party will provide to the CO or their designee:

- An inventory list showing actual amount of hazardous material brought aboard
- An MSDS for each material
- Confirmation that neutralizing agents and spill equipment were brought aboard sufficient to contain and cleanup all of the hazardous material brought aboard by the program
- Confirmation that chemical safety and spill response procedures were brought aboard

Upon departure from the ship, scientific parties will provide the CO or their designee an inventory showing that all chemicals were removed from the vessel. The CO's designee will maintain a log to track scientific party hazardous materials. MSDS will be made available to the ship's complement, in compliance with Hazard Communication Laws.

Scientific parties are expected to manage and respond to spills of scientific hazardous materials. Overboard discharge of hazardous materials is not permitted aboard NOAA ships.

B. Inventory

Item	Use	Approx. locations
95% Denatured Ethanol (20 gallons)	Sample preservation	Wetlab, under the chemical hood
10% Buffered Formalin (2 gallons)	Sample preservation	Wetlab, under the chemical hood
Chaos Buffer (0.5 gallons) (4 M guanidine thiocyanate, 0.5% N-lauroylsarcosine, 25 mM Tris pH 8.0, 0.1 M beta-mercaptoethanol)	Sample preservation (genetics)	Wetlab, under the chemical hood
Aqua Shield	Underwater Lubricant	ROV Workshop Fire Cabinet, Pit
Dow Corning 4	Electrical insulating compound	ROV Workshop Fire Cabinet, Pit
Fluid Film Spray	Silicone Lubricant	ROV Workshop Fire Cabinet
Isopropanol Alcohol (35 gallons)	Solvent	ROV Workshop Fire cabinet
Scotchkote	Electrical insulating compound	ROV Workshop Fire cabinet
3M Silicone Spray	Silicone Lubricant	ROV Workshop Fire cabinet
Synthetic AW Hydraulic Oil, ISO-22	Amsoil (AWG-05)	Hanger, Pit, Vehicles
Tap Magic Cutting Fluid	Cutting/Machining Lubricant	ROV Workshop Fire cabinet
Tap Magic Heavyweight Cutting Fluid	Cutting/Machining Lubricant	ROV Workshop Fire cabinet



Tuff Coat M	Marine Lubricant	Winch room
Dow Corning Molykote 111	Valve Lubricant and Sealant	ROV Workshop Fire cabinet, Pit
WD40	Lubricant	ROV Workshop Fire cabinet
Loktite	Bolt adhesive	ROV Workshop Fire cabinet
Mineral Oil	Vitrea	Hanger, Vehicles
Por-15	Paint Kit	ROV Workshop Fire cabinet
Univis HVI 13	Hydraulic Fluid	Hanger, ROV D2
Ultratane	Butane fuel	ROV Workshop fire cabinet
Rust-oleum	Protective Enamel	ROV Workshop fire cabinet
Flux-Off	Soldering Flux remover	ROV Workshop fire cabinet
Propane	Torch Fuel	ROV Workshop fire cabinet
Adhesive Pliobond 25	General adhesive	Tool room
AP 120 Metal Prep	Degreaser/cleaner for metal surfaces	Pit
Butane Fuel	Torch refill	Tool Room
PVC cement	Adhesive for PFV plastic piping	Tool Room
Phosphoric Acid	Ferrous metal rust removal	Tool room
Pipetite Paste	Plumbing sealant	Tool room/pit
Spindle Oil 10, ROS PT	Lubricant/compensation oil	Tool room
DC557	Silicon grease	Tool room/pit
Tether Potting Catalyst	Two part epoxy catalyst	Pit
Tether Potting Compound	Two part epoxy ingrediant	Pit
ThermaPlex Bearing Grease	Lubricant	Pit
Tritech Seaking	Compensator oil for sonar head	Pit

C. Chemical safety and spill response procedures

All safety and spill response procedures will be handled according to OMAO guidelines and following the manufacturer's MSDS which has been provided to the ship's ECO.

D. Radioactive Materials

NOT APPLICABLE TO THIS CRUISE

V. Additional Projects



**Ocean Exploration
and Research**

A. Supplementary Projects

NASA Maritime Aerosol Network

During the cruise the marine aerosol layer observations will be collected for the NASA Maritime Aerosol Network (MAN). Observations will be made by mission personnel (as time allows) with a sun photometer instrument provided by the NASA MAN program. Resulting data will be delivered to the NASA MAN primary investigator Alexander Smirnov by the expedition coordinator. All collected data will be archived and publically available at: http://aeronet.gsfc.nasa.gov/new_web/maritime_aerosol_network.html Equipment resides on the ship and is stewarded by the Expedition Coordinator. See Appendix G for full Survey of Opportunity Form.

B. NOAA Fleet Ancillary Projects

No NOAA Fleet Ancillary Projects are planned.

VI. Disposition of Data and Reports

A. Data Responsibilities

All data acquired on *Okeanos Explorer* will be provided to the public archives without proprietary rights. All data management activities shall be executed in accordance with [NAO 212-15, Management of Environmental and Geospatial Data and Information](#)

Ship Responsibilities

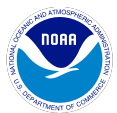
The Commanding Officer is responsible for all data collected for missions until those data have been transferred to mission party designees. Data transfers will be documented on NOAA Form 61-29. Reporting and sending copies of project data to NESDIS (ROSCOP form) is the responsibility of OER.

NOAA OER Responsibilities

The Expedition Coordinator will work with the *Okeanos Explorer* Operations Officer to ensure data pipeline protocols are followed for final archive of all data acquired on *Okeanos Explorer* without proprietary rights. See Appendix B for detailed data management plans.

Deliverables

1. At sea
 - a. Daily plans of the Day (POD)
 - b. Daily situation reports (SITREPS)
 - c. Summary forms for each ROV dive
 - d. Database containing records for each sample collection
 - e. Summary forms for each CTD rosette cast
 - f. Daily summary bathymetry data files
 - g. Raw sonar files (EM 302, EK 60, Subbottom, ADCP)
2. Post cruise
 - a. Refined SOPs for all pertinent operational activities
 - b. Assessments of all activities



3. Science

- a. Multibeam raw and processed data (see appendix B for the formal cruise data management plan)
- b. XBT raw and processed data
- c. EK 60 raw data
- d. Knudsen 3260 sub-bottom profiler raw data
- e. ADCP raw data
- f. Mapping data report
- g. Cruise report

Archive

OER and ship will work together to ensure documentation and stewardship of acquired data sets in accordance with NAO 212-15. The Cruise Information Management System is the primary tool used to accomplish this activity.



VII. Meetings, Vessel Familiarization, and Project Evaluations

A. Shipboard Meetings

A safety brief and overview of POD will occur on the Bridge each morning at 0800. Daily Operations Briefing meetings will be held at a time and location determined by Operations Officer based on watch schedule, to review the current day, and define operations, associated requirements, and staffing needs for the following day. A Plan of the Day (POD) will be posted each evening for the next day in specified locations throughout the ship. Daily Situation Reports (SITREPS) will be posted as well and shared daily through email.

1. Pre-Project Meeting:

The Expedition Coordinator and Commanding Officer will conduct a meeting of pertinent members of the scientific party and ship's crew to discuss required equipment, planned operations, concerns, and establish mitigation strategies for all concerns. This meeting shall be conducted before the beginning of the project with sufficient time to allow for preparation of the ship and project personnel. The ship's Operations Officer usually is delegated to assist the Expedition Coordinator in arranging this meeting.

2. Vessel Familiarization Meeting:

The Commanding Officer is responsible for ensuring scientific personnel are familiarized with applicable sections of the standing orders and vessel protocols, e.g., meals, watches, etiquette, drills, etc. A vessel familiarization meeting shall be conducted in the first 24 hours of the project's start and is normally presented by the ship's Operations Officer.

3. Post-Project Meeting:

The Commanding Officer is responsible for conducting a meeting no earlier than 24 hours before or seven days after the completion of a project to discuss the overall success, challenges, and shortcomings of the project. Concerns regarding safety, efficiency, and suggestions for future improvements shall be discussed and mitigations for future projects will be documented for future use. This meeting shall be attended by the applicable ship's officers, applicable crew, the Expedition Coordinator, and members of the scientific party and is normally arranged by the Operations Officer and Expedition Coordinator.

4. Project Evaluation Report:

Within seven days of the completion of the project, a Customer Satisfaction Survey is to be completed by the Expedition Coordinator. The form is available at https://docs.google.com/a/noaa.gov/forms/d/1a5hCCkgIwaSII4DmrHPudAehQ9HqhRqY3j_FXqblp9g/viewform and provides a "Submit" button at the end of the form. Submitted form data is deposited into a spreadsheet used by OMAO management to analyze the information. Though the complete form is not shared with the ship, specific concerns and praises are followed up on while not divulging the identity of the evaluator.

VIII. Miscellaneous



A. Meals and Berthing

The ship will provide meals for the scientists listed above. Meals will be served 3 times daily beginning one hour before scheduled departure, extending throughout the project, and ending two hours after the termination of the project. Since the watch schedule is split between day and night, the night watch may often miss daytime meals and will require adequate food and beverages (for example a variety of sandwich items, cheeses, fruit, milk, juices) during what are not typically meal hours. Special dietary requirements for scientific participants will be made available to the ship's command at least twenty-one days prior to the survey (e.g., Expedition Coordinator is allergic to fin fish).

Berthing requirements, including number and gender of the scientific party, will be provided to the ship by the Expedition Coordinator. The Expedition Coordinator and Operations Officer will work together on a detailed berthing plan to accommodate the gender mix of the scientific party taking into consideration the current makeup of the ship's complement. The Expedition Coordinator is responsible for ensuring the scientific berthing spaces are left in the condition in which they were received; for stripping bedding and linen return; and for the return of any room keys which were issued. The Expedition Coordinator is also responsible for the cleanliness of the laboratory spaces and the storage areas utilized by the scientific party, both during the cruise and at its conclusion prior to departing the ship.

All NOAA scientists will have proper travel orders when assigned to any NOAA ship. The Expedition Coordinator will ensure that all non-NOAA or non-Federal scientists aboard also have proper orders. It is the responsibility of the Expedition Coordinator to ensure that the entire scientific party has a mechanism in place to provide lodging and food and to be reimbursed for these costs in the event that the ship becomes uninhabitable and/or the galley is closed during any part of the scheduled project.

All persons boarding NOAA vessels give implied consent to comply with all safety and security policies and regulations which are administered by the Commanding Officer. All spaces and equipment on the vessel are subject to inspection or search at any time. All personnel must comply with OMAO's Drug and Alcohol Policy dated May 7, 1999 which forbids the possession and/or use of illegal drugs and alcohol aboard NOAA Vessels.

B. Medical Forms and Emergency Contacts

The NOAA Health Services Questionnaire (NHSQ, NF 57-10-01 (3-14)) must be completed 30 days in advance by each participating scientist. The NHSQ can be obtained from the Expedition Coordinator or the NOAA website

<http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/noaaforms/eforms/nf57-10-01.pdf>.

All NHSQs submitted must be accompanied by [NOAA Form \(NF\) 57-10-02 - Tuberculosis Screening Document](#) in compliance with OMAO Policy 1008 (Tuberculosis Protection Program).

The completed forms should be sent to the Regional Director of Health Services at the applicable Marine Operations Center. The NHSQ and Tuberculosis Screening Document should reach the Health Services Office no later than four weeks prior to the start of the project to allow time for the participant to obtain and submit additional information should



health services require it, before clearance to sail can be granted. Please contact MOC Health Services with any questions regarding eligibility or completion of either form. Ensure to fully complete each form and indicate the ship or ships the participant will be sailing on. The participant will receive an email notice when medically cleared to sail if a legible email address is provided on the NHSQ.

The participant can mail, fax, or email the forms to the contact information below.

Participants should take precautions to protect their Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and medical information and ensure all correspondence adheres to DOC guidance (http://ocio.os.doc.gov/ITPolicyandPrograms/IT_Privacy/PROD01_008240).

The only secure email process approved by NOAA is Accellion Secure File Transfer which requires the sender to setup an account. Accellion's Web Users Guide is a valuable aid in using this service, however to reduce cost the DOC contract doesn't provide for automatically issuing full functioning accounts. To receive access to a "Send Tab," after your Accellion account has been established send an email from the associated email account to accellionAlerts@doc.gov requesting access to the "Send Tab" function. They will notify you via email, usually within one business day of your approval. The "Send Tab" function will be accessible for 30 days.

Contact Information:

Regional Director of Health Services

Marine Operations Center – Atlantic

439 W. York Street

Norfolk, VA 23510

Telephone: (757) 441.6320

Fax: (757) 441.3760

Email: MOA.Health.Services@noaa.gov

Please make sure the medicalexplorer@noaa.gov email address is cc'd on all medical correspondence.

Prior to departure, the Expedition Coordinator must provide a listing of emergency contacts to the Operations Officer for all members of the scientific party, with the following information: name, address, relationship to member, and telephone number.

Emergency contact form is included as Appendix A.

C. Shipboard Safety

Hard hats are required when working with suspended loads. Work vests are required when working near open railings and during small boat launch and recovery operations. Hard hats and work vests will be provided by the ship when required.

Wearing open-toed footwear or shoes that do not completely enclose the foot (such as sandals or clogs) outside of private berthing areas is not permitted. Steel-toed shoes are required to participate in any work dealing with suspended loads, including CTD deployments and recovery. The ship does not provide steel-toed boots. Hard hats are also required when working with suspended loads. Work vests are required when working near open railings and during small boat launch and recovery operations. Hard hats and work vests will be provided by the ship when required.



Operational Risk Management: For every operation to be conducted aboard the ship (NOAA-wide initiative), risk management procedures will be followed. For each operation, risks will be identified and assessed for probability and severity. Risk mitigation strategies/measures will be investigated and implemented where possible. After mitigation, the residual risk will have to be assessed to make Go-No Go decisions for the operations. Particularly with new operations, risk assessment will be ongoing and updated as necessary. This does not only apply to over-the-side operations, but to everyday tasks aboard the vessel that pose risk to personnel and property.

- CTD, ROV (and other pertinent) ORM documents will be followed by all personnel working onboard *Okeanos Explorer*.
- All personnel onboard are in the position of calling a halt to operations/activities in the event of a safety concern.

D. Communications

A daily situation report (SITREP) on operations prepared by the Expedition Coordinator will be relayed to the program office. Sometimes it is necessary for the Expedition Coordinator to communicate with another vessel, aircraft, or shore facility. Through various modes of communication, the ship is able to maintain contact with the Marine Operations Center on an as needed basis. These methods will be made available to the Expedition Coordinator upon request, in order to conduct official business. The ship's primary means of communication with the Marine Operations Center is via email and the Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) link. VSAT bandwidth at 15Mbps will be paid by OER and provided by OMAO.

Specific information on how to contact NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer* and all other fleet vessels can be found at <http://www.moc.noaa.gov/MOC/phone.html#EX>

Important Telephone and Facsimile Numbers and E-mail Addresses

Ocean Exploration and Research (OER):

OER Program Administration

Phone: (301) 734-1010

Fax: (301) 713-4252

Email: Firstname.Lastname@noaa.gov

University of New Hampshire, Center for Coastal and Ocean Mapping

Phone: (603) 862-3438

Fax: (603) 862-0839

NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer* - Telephone methods listed in order of increasing expense:

Okeanos Explorer Cellular: (401) 713-4114

Okeanos Explorer Iridium:(808) 659-9179

OER Mission Iridium (dry lab): (808) 851-3827

EX INMARSAT B

Line 1: 011-870-764-852-328

Line 2: 011-870-764-852-329

Voice Over IP (VoIP) Phone:

(541) 867-8932



**Ocean Exploration
and Research**

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(541) 867-8933

(541) 867-8934

Email: Ops.Explorer@noaa.gov- (mention the person's name in SUBJECT field)

Email: expeditioncoordinator.explorer@noaa.gov for dissemination of all hands emails by Expedition Coordinator while onboard. See ET for password.

E. IT Security

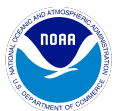
1. Any computer that will be hooked into the ship's network must comply with the OMAO Fleet IT Security Policy 1.1 (November 4, 2005) prior to establishing a direct connection to the NOAA WAN. Requirements include, but are not limited to:
Installation of the latest virus definition (.DAT) file on all systems and performance of a virus scan on each system.
2. Installation of the latest critical operating system security patches.
3. No external public Internet Service Provider (ISP) connections.

Completion of these requirements prior to boarding the ship is required.

Non-NOAA personnel using the ship's computers or connecting their own computers to the ship's network must complete NOAA's IT Security Awareness Course within three days of embarking.

F. Foreign National Guests Access to OMAO Facilities and Platforms

There are currently no planned Foreign National Guests.

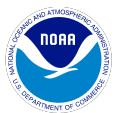


Appendix A

EMERGENCY CONTACT DATA SHEET—NOAA SHIP *OKEANOS EXPLORER*

Scientists sailing aboard *Okeanos Explorer* shall fill out the form found at the following link location:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSe0spa6ORrLrUXvl0bttA50tQNeCKmNpg2_VKnFh0_BHlhN1g/viewform with their emergency contact information



Appendix B: Data Management Pl



Data Management Plan

Okeanos Explorer (EX1803): Gulf of Mexico (ROV & Mapping)



Ocean Exploration
and Research

OER Data Management Objectives

Testing all newly re-designed network impacts on data pipelines. Updating sample data management standard operating procedures.

20-Mar-18

Page 1

1. General Description of Data to be Managed

1.1 Name and Purpose of the Data Collection Project

Okeanos Explorer (EX1803): Gulf of Mexico (ROV & Mapping)

1.2 Summary description of the data to be collected.

Operations will include the use of the ship's deep water mapping systems (Kongsberg EM302 multibeam sonar, EK60 split-beam fisheries sonars, Knudsen 3260 chirp sub-bottom profiler sonar, and Teledyne Acoustic Doppler Current Profiler), XBT and CTD casts in support of multibeam sonar mapping operations, OER's two-body ROV Deep Discoverer and Seirios, and the ship's high-bandwidth satellite connection for continuous real-time ship-to-shore communications. Operations are planned in and around the US Gulf of Mexico and potentially the international waters of the Gulf.

1.3 Keywords or phrases that could be used to enable users to find the data.

expedition, exploration, explorer, marine education, noaa, ocean, ocean discovery, ocean education, ocean exploration, ocean exploration and research, ocean literacy, ocean research, OER, science, scientific mission, scientific research, sea, stewardship, systematic exploration, technology, transformational research, undersea, underwater, Davisville, mapping survey, multibeam, multibeam backscatter, multibeam sonar, multi-beam sonar, noaa fleet, okeanos, okeanos explorer, R337, Rhode Island, scientific computing system, SCS, single beam sonar, singlebeam sonar, single-beam sonar, sub-bottom profile, water column backscatter

1.4 If this mission is part of a series of missions, what is the series name?

Okeanos ROV Cruises

1.5 Planned or actual temporal coverage of the data.

Dates: 4/11/2018 to 5/3/2018

1.6 Planned or actual geographic coverage of the data.

Latitude Boundaries: 23.7 to 30.2

Longitude Boundaries: -97.2 to -80.9

1.7 What data types will you be creating or capturing and submitting for archive?

Cruise Plan, Cruise Summary, Data Management Plan, Highlight Images, Quick Look Report, CTD (processed), CTD (product), CTD (raw), Dive Summaries, EK60 Singlebeam Data, Expedition Cruise Report, Floating Point GeoTIF, HDCS, Highlight Video, Images, Multibeam (image), Multibeam (processed), Multibeam (product), Multibeam (raw), NetCDF, Publication, Raw Video (digital), Raw video inventory logs, Sample Logs, SCS Output (compressed), SCS Output (native), Sub-Bottom Profile data, Temperature data, Water Column Backscatter, XBT

Okeanos Explorer (EX1803): Gulf of Mexico (ROV & Mapping)



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(raw)

1.8 What platforms will be employed during this mission?

NOAA Ship Okeanos Explorer, Deep Discoverer ROV, SEIRIOS Camera Sled

2. Point of Contact for this Data Producing Project

Overall POC: Lt. Nikolai Pawlenko
 Title: Expedition Coordinator
 Affiliation/Dept: NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research
 E-Mail: Nikolai.Pawlenko@noaa.gov
 Phone: (401) 874-6478

3. Point of Contact for Managing the Data

Data POC Name: Susan Gottfried
 Title: OER Data Management Coordinator
 E-Mail: susan.gottfried@noaa.gov

4. Resources

4.1 Have resources for management of these data been identified? True

4.2 Approximate percentage of the budget devoted to data management. (specify % or "unknown")
 unknown

5. Data Lineage and Quality**5.1 What is the processing workflow from collection to public release?**

SCS data shall be delivered in its native format as well as an archive-ready, documented, and compressed NetCDF3 format to NCEI-MD; multibeam data and metadata will be compressed and delivered in a bagit format to NCEI-CO

5.2 What quality control procedures will be employed?

Quality control procedures for the data from the Kongsberg EM302 is handled at UNH CCOM/JHC. Raw (level-0) bathymetry files are cleaned/edited into new data files (level-1) and converted to a variety of products (level-2). Data from sensors monitored through the SCS are archived in their native format and are not quality controlled. Data from CTD casts and XBT firings are archived in their native format. CTDs are post-processed by the data management team as a quality control measure and customized CTD profiles are generated for display on the Okeanos Atlas (explore.noaa.gov/okeanosatlas).

6. Data Documentation

True

6.1 Does the metadata comply with the Data Documentation Directive?**6.1.1 If metadata are non-existent or non-compliant, please explain:**

not applicable

6.2 Where will the metadata be hosted?

Okeanos Explorer (EX1803): Gulf of Mexico (ROV & Mapping)



Organization: An ISO format collection-level metadata record will be generated during pre-cruise planning and published in an OER catalog and Web Accessible Folder (WAF) hosted at NCEI-MS for

URL: <https://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/oer-waf/ISO/Resolved/2018/>

Meta Std: ISO 19115-2 Geographic Information with Extensions for Imagery and Gridded Data will be the metadata standard employed; a NetCDF3 standard for oceanographic data will be employed for the SCS data; the Library of Congress standard, MACHine Readable Catalog (MARC), will be employed for NOAA Central Library records.

6.3 Process for producing and maintaining metadata:

Metadata will be generated via xml editors or metadata generation tools.

7. Data Access

True

7.1 Do the data comply with the Data Access Directive?

7.1.1 If the data will not be available to the public, or with limitations, provide a valid reason.

Not Applicable

7.1.2 If there are limitations, describe how data are protected from unauthorized access.

Account access to mission systems are maintained and controlled by the Program. Data access prior to public accessibility is documented through the use of Data Request forms and standard operating procedures.

7.2 Name and URL of organization or facility providing data access.

Org: National Centers for Environmental Information

URL: <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/>

7.3 Approximate delay between data collection and dissemination. By what authority?

Hold Time: not applicable

Authority: not applicable

7.4 Prepare a Data Access Statement

No data access constraints, unless data are protected under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

8. Data Preservation and Protection

8.1 Actual or planned long-term data archive location:

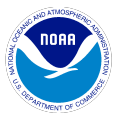
Data from this mission will be preserved and stewarded through the NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information. Refer to the Okeanos Explorer FY16 Data Management Plan at NOAA's EDMC DMP Repository (EX_FY16_DMP_Final.pdf) for detailed descriptions of the processes, procedures, and partners involved in this collaborative effort.

8.2 If no archive planned, why?

8.3 If any delay between data collection and submission to an archive facility, please explain.

8.4 How will data be protected from accidental or malicious modification or deletion?

Okeanos Explorer (EX1803): Gulf of Mexico (ROV & Mapping)



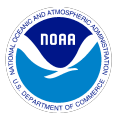
8.4 How will data be protected from accidental or malicious modification or deletion?

Data management standard operating procedures minimizing accidental or malicious modification or deletion are in place aboard the Okeanos Explorer and will be enforced.

8.5 Prepare a Data Use Statement

Data use shall be credited to NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research.

Okeanos Explorer (EX1803): Gulf of Mexico (ROV & Mapping)



Appendix C: Categorical Exclusion

Form Version: September 2017

Categorical Exclusion (CE) Evaluation Worksheet

Project Identifier: EX1803

Date Review Completed: 3/5/2018

Completed by: LTJG Nikolai Pawlenko

OAR Functional Area: OER

Worksheet File Name: 2018-03-OER-CE-EX1803

Step 1. CE applicability

- 1. Is this federal financial assistance, including via grants, cooperative agreements, loans, loan guarantees, interest subsidies, insurance, food commodities, direct appropriations, and transfers of property in place of money?**

no

- 2. What is the proposed federal action?**

The proposed action is to collect baseline mapping data using the NOAA Ship Okeanos Explorer's sonar systems and to conduct baseline characterizations of unexplored areas using NOAA's two-body remotely operated vehicle (ROV) and CTD rosette system on the NOAA Ship Okeanos Explorer. ROV operations will include collection of detailed high resolution imagery, collection of limited biological and geological samples, and digital sensor data collection.

The expedition will conduct operations in the US Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Gulf of Mexico and potentially in international waters of the Gulf of Mexico, commencing on April 11, 2018 in Pascagoula MS, (30° 20.36'NN, 88° 34.50'W) and concluding on May 3, 2018 in Key West FL (24° 33.86'N, 81° 48.01'W). See Project Instructions EX-18-03 for more details.

- 3. Which class of CE in Appendix E of the NAO 216-6A Companion Manual is applicable to this action and why?**



- a. E3: Activities to collect aquatic, terrestrial, and atmospheric data in a non-destructive manner.
- b. This exploratory expedition will use remote sensing, video, imagery and a limited number of samples to collect baseline information on unexplored areas of the Gulf of Mexico

Step 2. Extraordinary Circumstances Consideration

4. Would the action result in adverse effects on human health or safety that are not negligible?

No. The NOAA Ship Okeanos Explorer will be operating in deep sea areas of the Gulf of Mexico during EX-18-03, an expedition which is part of the Southeast Deep Coral Initiative (SEDCI), (see Table 1 of EX-18-03 Project Instructions: Bounding coordinates of the EX-18-03 operating area) This action does not involve any procedures or outcomes known to result in impacts on human health and safety more than would be negligible.

5. Would the action result in adverse effects on an area with unique environmental characteristics that are not negligible?

This survey/expedition will conduct operations near the Florida Keys and Flower Gardens National Marine Sanctuaries, but not within sanctuary boundaries. OER is working closely with Sanctuaries staff to ensure impacts will be less than negligible.

The expedition is being planned and conducted in partnership with NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS), Deep Sea Coral Research and Technology Program (DSCRTP), Florida Keys NMS and Flower Gardens Banks NMS, Gulf of Mexico Fisheries Management Council and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). OER will use input from these management authorities that are familiar with these areas to ensure no more than negligible effects on these areas with potentially unique environmental characteristics.

6. Would the action result in adverse effects on species or habitats protected by the ESA, MMPA, MSA, NMSA, or MBTA that are not negligible?

OER and the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) have taken measures to ensure that any effects on species or habitats protected by the ESA, MMPA, MSA or NMSA meet the definition of "negligible". In June 2017, a request from NCCOS was submitted to the NMFS



PIRO Protected Resources Division to initiate consultation under Section 7 of the ESA for all Southeast Deep Coral Initiative (SEDCI) cruises. Accompanying this request was a biological assessment that described the planned operations proposed for 2017-2019 expeditions in the Gulf of Mexico and the South Atlantic that identified all ESA-listed species, including corals, in the vicinity of the operations. On August 17, 2017, NCCOS received a letter that concurred with its determination that these 2017-2019 operations are not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed species. The ESA Section 7 concurrence letter is provided as an Appendix in the Project Instructions document for EX-18-03.

Given the offshore focus area of our work, it is improbable that we will encounter marine mammals protected under the MMPA or sea birds protected under the MBTA. If we did encounter any marine mammals or seabirds, our effect would be negligible because of the best management practices to which we adhere to avoid or minimize environmental effects. NCCOS also initiated a request for a Magnuson-Stevens Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) consultation for this same series of cruises and subsequently received a determination that the proposed cruises will not reduce the quality and/or quantity of EFH, provided adherence to the OER proposed procedures and the NMFS guidance were both conveyed via letter from Virginia Fay Assistant Regional Administrator, NMFS Habitat Conservation Division on June 22, 2017.

7. Would the action result in the potential to generate, use, store, transport, or dispose of hazardous or toxic substances, in a manner that may have a significant effect on the environment?

No. The cruise operations will be in compliance with FEC 07 Hazardous Materials and Hazardous Waste Management Requirements for Visiting Scientific Parties (or superseding OMAO procedures) to ensure generation, use, storage, transport, and disposal of such substances will not result in significant impacts.

8. Would the action result in adverse effects on properties listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, National Historic Landmarks designated by the Secretary of the Interior, or National Monuments designated through the Antiquities Act of 1906; Federally recognized Tribal and Native Alaskan lands, cultural or natural resources, or religious or cultural sites that cannot be resolved through applicable regulatory processes?

During EX-18-03, we will be conducting ROV dives on sonar anomaly targets believed to be shipwrecks. If these anomalies are confirmed to be significant shipwrecks, they can potentially be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. OER conducts non-invasive surveys of archaeology targets and protects the location of sensitive cultural heritage sites



(UCH). Appendix H of the EX-18-03 project instructions includes OER's standard operating procedures for UCH sites. This expedition is being planned in conjunction with the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' Maritime Heritage Program and the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM). Staff from the Maritime Heritage Program and BOEM will participate in UCH operations to ensure that operations are non-invasive and compliant to all applicable regulations.

9. Would the action result in a disproportionately high and adverse effect on the health or the environment of minority or low-income communities, compared to the impacts on other communities (EO 12898)?

No, the NOAA Ship Okeanos Explorer will be operating in deep sea areas of the Gulf of Mexico (see Table 1, EX 18-03 Project Instructions). There are no human communities within the geographic scope of the cruise, and when nearshore, operations will be conducted several miles offshore. The cruise does not involve actions known or likely to result in adverse impacts on human health.

10. Would the action contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or nonnative invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of the species?

No. During EX-18-03 the ship will not make landfall in areas other than commercial ports. The ship and OER mission team will comply with all applicable local and federal regulations regarding the prevention or spread of invasive species. At the completion of every ROV dive or CTD cast, the systems will be thoroughly rinsed with fresh water, completely dried and checked for the presence of biological organisms to prevent spreading organisms from one site to another. Also the Engineering Department aboard the NOAA Ship Okeanos Explorer attends yearly Ballast Management Training in accordance with NOAA Form 57-07-13 NPDES VGP Annual Inspection and Report to prevent the introduction of invasive species.

11. Would the action result in a potential violation of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for protection of the environment?

The proposed action will not result in any violations of Federal, State, or local law or requirements imposed for protection of the environment. The survey coordinator obtained (or



are in the process of obtaining) authorizations and/or consultations pursuant to applicable laws. See responses to questions #4, 5, 6, and 7 for details.

12. Would the action result in highly controversial environmental effects?

No. The exploration activities will be localized and of short duration in any particular area at any given time. Given this project's scope and breadth, no notable or lasting changes or highly controversial effects to the environment will result.

13. Does the action have the potential to establish a precedent for future action or an action that represents a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects?

No. While each cruise contributes to the overarching goal of exploring, mapping, and sampling the ocean, every cruise is independently useful and not connected to subsequent cruises.

14. Would the action result in environmental effects that are uncertain, unique, or unknown?

No. The techniques and equipment used are standard for this type of field activity.

15. Does the action have the potential for significant cumulative impacts when the proposed action is combined with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future actions, even though the impacts of the proposed action may not be significant by themselves?

By definition, actions that a federal agency classifies as a categorical exclusion have no potential, individually or cumulatively, to significantly affect the environment. This cruise is consistent with a class of CE established by NOAA, and there are no extraordinary circumstances for this action that may otherwise result in potentially significant impacts.



CE Determination

I have determined that a Categorical Exclusion is the appropriate level of NEPA analysis for this action and that no extraordinary circumstances exist that would require preparation of an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.

I have determined that an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement is required for this action.

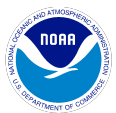
Signature: *Craig Russell*

Signed by: Craig W Russell

Date Signed: March 5, 2018



Appendix D: ESA Section Letter of Concurrency





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Silver Spring, MD 20910

AUG 17 2017

Rebecca R. Holyoke, Ph.D.
Acting Director
United States Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Ocean Service
National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Refer to NMFS No: FPR-2017-9223

RE: Concurrence letter for activities to be conducted for National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science-led activities as part of the Southeast Deep Coral Initiative in 2017 through 2019

Dear Dr. Holyoke:

On June 22, 2017, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) received your request for a written concurrence that the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's activities to be conducted as part of the Southeast Deep Coral Initiative in 2017 through 2019 under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA; 16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) is not likely to adversely affect species listed as threatened or endangered or critical habitats designated under the ESA. This response to your request was prepared by NMFS pursuant to section 7(a)(2) of the ESA, implementing regulations at (50 CFR §402), and agency guidance for preparation of letters of concurrence.

This letter underwent pre-dissemination review using standards for utility, integrity, and objectivity in compliance with agency guidelines issued under section 515 of the Treasury and General Government Appropriations Act of 2001 (Data Quality Act; 44 U.S.C. 3504(d)(1) and 3516). The concurrence letter will be available through NMFS' consultation tracking system <https://pcts.nmfs.noaa.gov/pcts-web/homepage.pcts>. A complete record of this consultation is on file at NOAA Fisheries Office of Protected Resources in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Action Agency's Effect Determinations

The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science determined that the activities to be conducted as part of the Southeast Deep Coral Initiative may affect, but are not likely to adversely affect, the species or distinct population segments (DPS) listed in Table 1. Additionally, the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science determined that the proposed action would not destroy or adversely modify any critical habitats designated in the action area (Table 1).

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Ocean Exploration
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Table 1. Action agency determinations for species and critical habitat.

Species	ESA Status	Critical Habitat	Action Agency Determination
Marine Mammals			
Blue whale (<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>)	Endangered	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect
Fin whale (<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>)	Endangered	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect
Sei Whale (<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>)	Endangered	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect
Bryde's whale, Gulf of Mexico subspecies (<i>Balaenoptera edeni</i>)	Endangered	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect
Sperm whale (<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>)	Endangered	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect
North Atlantic Right whale (<i>Eubalaena glacialis</i>)	Endangered	No effect	Not likely to adversely affect
Marine Reptiles			
Green turtle (<i>Chelonia mydas</i>) – North Atlantic DPS	Threatened	No effect	Not likely to adversely affect
Hawksbill turtle (<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>)	Endangered	No effect	Not likely to adversely affect
Kemp's ridley turtle (<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>)	Endangered	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect
Leatherback turtle (<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>)	Endangered	No effect	Not likely to adversely affect
Loggerhead turtle (<i>Caretta caretta</i>) – Northwest Atlantic Ocean DPS	Threatened	No effect	Not likely to adversely affect
Marine and Anadromous Fishes			
Gulf sturgeon (<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi</i>)	Threatened	No effect	Not likely to adversely affect
Smalltooth sawfish (<i>Pristis pectinata</i>) – U.S. portion of range DPS	Endangered	No effect	Not likely to adversely affect
Nassau grouper (<i>Epinephelus striatus</i>)	Threatened	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect
Atlantic sturgeon (<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus</i>) – South Atlantic DPS	Endangered	No effect	Not likely to adversely affect
Atlantic sturgeon (<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus</i>) – Carolina DPS	Endangered	No effect	Not likely to adversely affect
Oceanic whitetip shark (<i>Carcharhinus longimanus</i>)	Proposed Threatened	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect
Giant manta ray (<i>Manta birostris</i>)	Proposed Threatened	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect



Species	ESA Status	Critical Habitat	Action Agency Determination
Marine Invertebrates			
Elkhorn coral (<i>Acropora palmata</i>)	Threatened	No effect	Not likely to adversely affect
Staghorn coral (<i>Acropora cervicornis</i>)	Threatened	No effect	Not likely to adversely affect
Pillar coral (<i>Dendrogyra cylindrus</i>)	Threatened	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect
Mountainous star coral (<i>Orbicella faveolata</i>)	Threatened	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect
Boulder star coral (<i>Orbicella franksi</i>)	Threatened	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect
Lobed star coral (<i>Orbicella annularis</i>)	Threatened	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect
Rough cactus coral (<i>Mycetophyllia ferox</i>)	Threatened	N/A	Not likely to adversely affect

Proposed Action and Action Area

The NOAA Deep-Sea Coral Research and Technology Program identified research needs in the U.S. Federal waters of the South Atlantic Bight, the Caribbean Sea, and the northern Gulf of Mexico. The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science proposes to fund a three-year project to collect information on the deep-water corals found in these areas to provide scientific information to manage, conserve, and protect deep-sea coral and sponge ecosystems. The proposed action will survey the species and abundance of deep-water corals and sponges to inform proposals for new managed areas in the region. The proposed action will:

- 1) Survey deep-sea coral ecosystems using remotely operated vehicles.
- 2) Map deep-water habitats using multibeam echosounders.
- 3) Sample the physical and chemical properties of the water column via the deployment of conductivity, temperature, and depth casts and collection of water samples.

The study will target several non ESA-listed species of deep-water corals. “Deep-water corals” here are regarded as those at depths greater than 50 meters. These include *Lophelia pertusa*, *Leiopathes glaberrima*, and other coral members of the Cnidarian orders Scleractinia, Antipatharia, Alcyonacea, and Gorgonacea. Deep-water sponge species will also be sampled: Classes Demospongiae, Hexactenellidae, Calcarea, and Homoscleromorpha. *Lophelia pertusa*, and *Leiopathes glaberrima* are typically found at depths between 300 and 1,000 meters. The other coral members of the Cnidarian orders are found at depths greater than 50 meters, as are the deep-water sponge species.

The study will involve vessel operations aboard two vessels; the vessel used will depend upon the area for the particular cruise and the availability of the vessel at a given time. The two cruises in August 2017 will be conducted aboard the NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster*. The later cruises in 2018 and 2019 will be conducted on board either the NOAA Ships *Nancy Foster* or the NOAA *Okeanos Explorer*, depending on availability and proximity to the sampling site.



Researchers will use either of two remotely operated vehicles (ROVs) to collect samples from target coral species and collect video imagery. The ROV used for each cruise will depend on the ship used. It is still being determined what type of ROV will be used for cruises aboard the NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster*. For cruises aboard the NOAA Ship *Okeanos*, the researchers will use the two-bodied ROV Deep Discoverer and Serios. Each of the proposed ROVs are equipped with acoustic telemetry devices (a transponder unit, a receiving beacon, and an altimeter) which are used to locate the ROV during use. The transponder units emit signals at between eight and 30 kilohertz, and the receiving beacons also transmit signals in the mid-frequency range (21.5 to 43.2 kilohertz). The ROV may also use high-frequency imaging sonar (675 kilohertz) and an altimeter (500 kilohertz).

Active acoustic sources would be part of the proposed action. There will be a few different hull-mounted multi-beam echosounders used by the research vessels. The proposed action would use different multibeam echosounders because each has a unique operational depth and will thus be able to ensonify the seafloor at a variety of depths. On board the NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster*, three devices may be used. The Reson 712 SV2 has a dual frequency of 200 kilohertz or 400 kilohertz, with an optimal depth range of five to 250 meters. The Simrad EM 1002 operates at 95 kilohertz, and has an optimal depth of 200 to 1,000 meters. The Kongsberg/Simrad EK60 operates at 38, 120, and 200 kilohertz. The NOAA Ship *Okeanos* has two mutli-beam echosounders. The Kongsberg EM-302 operates at 30 kilohertz, with an optimal range of 250 to 7,000 meters. The NOAA Ship *Okeanos* also uses a Kongsberg/Simrad EK60. During operation, the power setting for all devices is at the lowest possible level (approximately 190 to 210 dB re: 1 μ PA with a duty cycle set to 10 to 30 hertz).

The ROV will move along pre-determined transects; dives last about two to six hours. The ROV will be tethered at all times. The ROV and the vessel will be moving at between 0.5 and one knot while the ROV is deployed. About six samples will be collected during each dive, and there will be between one and three dives per day. During sample collection, the ROV will hover about one meter from the bottom to avoid making contact with substrate. Coral samples will be collected by a cutting tool on the ROV. Samples will be about ten to 50 centimeters long, cut from the distal branches of each targeted coral colony.

During cruises, researchers would also use a conductivity, temperature, and depth (CTD) cast to collect water samples and characterize the chemical and physical properties of the water around deep-water coral and sponge ecosystems. The CTD Sea Bird Electronics-32 (SBE-32) is a device, 3.25 feet in diameter and four feet tall, that holds 12 five liter bottles on a carousel. The bottles are programmed to open and collect water at different depths. It weighs 69 kilograms, and is lowered into the water by a power winch. An SBE 9-11 sensor is attached to the CTD SBE-32, and it is used to take water measurements for parameters like temperature, depth, conductivity, pressure, and dissolved oxygen.

The study will be conducted for three years, with cruises typically taking place in the summer (May through September). The first two cruises will take place in August 2017, with one 13-day cruise and one five-day cruise. The first 2017 cruise will leave and return to St. Petersburg, Florida, and focus on surveying the deep-sea coral habitats off West Florida, in the Gulf of Mexico. The second 2017 cruise will leave St. Petersburg and end in Charleston, South Carolina, focusing on deep-sea corals off East Florida. The cruises for 2018 and 2019 are still being planned, and could occur in the South Atlantic, northern Gulf of Mexico, and the Caribbean. The



National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science expects that there will be four surveys per year in 2018 and 2019.

Action Area

The study would take place in three regions of the Southeast U.S. Federal waters: the northern Gulf of Mexico, the South Atlantic Bight, and the Caribbean Sea. The deep-water coral research activities could take place in existing (in orange on the maps) or proposed (in green and purple on the maps) marine managed areas. Areas proposed for inclusion in the marine managed areas would be prioritized for sampling over already-existing marine managed areas.

Gulf of Mexico

The areas prioritized for survey in the northern Gulf of Mexico include those in the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary, off Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas (Figure 1). Other potential areas for research include the waters around the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary and additional areas off Florida.

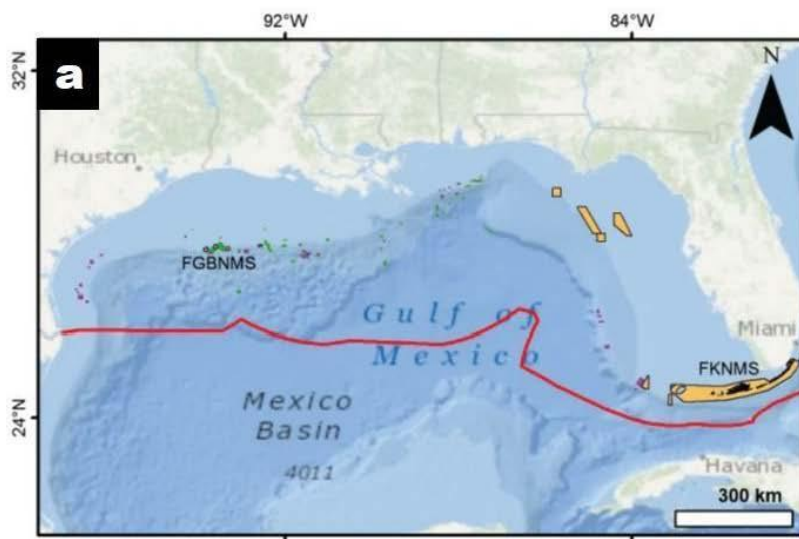


Figure 1. Map of proposed survey areas in the Gulf of Mexico. Areas prioritized for surveys include the Flower Garden Banks National Marine Sanctuary (FGBNMS) and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS).

South Atlantic Bight

The areas surveyed in the South Atlantic Bight would include those off the coast of North Carolina, south around the Florida Peninsula (Figure 2). Sites proposed for inclusion in marine managed areas include those near Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary, off Georgia, and the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary, off North Carolina.



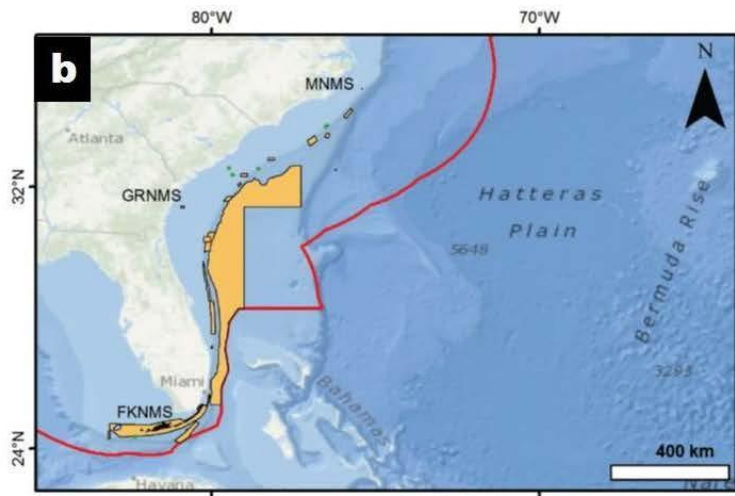


Figure 2. Map of proposed survey areas in the South Atlantic Bight. Areas prioritized for surveys include the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary (FKNMS), the Gray's Reef National Marine Sanctuary (GRNMS), and the Monitor National Marine Sanctuary (MNMS).

Caribbean Sea

The areas surveyed in the Caribbean Sea will include those waters around the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and its surrounding islands such as Vieques, Culebra, Mona, Desecheo, and Monito (Figure 3). Surveys may also take place around the Navassa Island National Wildlife Refuge, a small, uninhabited island west of Haiti administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

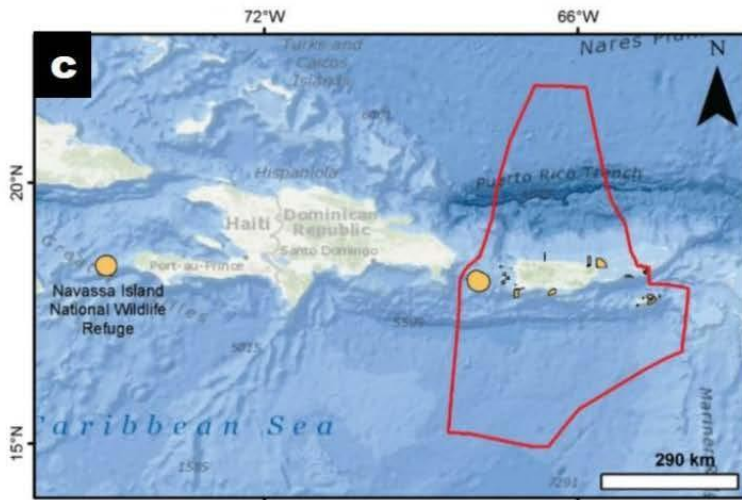


Figure 3. Map of proposed survey areas in the Caribbean.



Neither NMFS nor the Office of Coast Survey identified any interrelated or interdependent activities associated with the proposed action.

Minimization Measures

The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's activities would include the same protective measures described and analyzed in the 2013 Biological Opinion (see description in Consultation History). These measures are as follows:

- Minimize vessel disturbance and ship strike potential
 - Reduced speeds (less than 13 knots) when transiting through ranges of ESA-listed cetaceans (unless otherwise required, e.g., NOAA Sanctuaries)
 - Reduced speeds (less than 13 knots) while transiting through designated critical habitat (unless slower speeds are required, e.g., less than 10 knots in right whale designated critical habitat and management areas)
 - Trained observers aboard all vessels; 100 percent observer coverage
 - Species identification keys (for marine mammals, sea turtles, as applicable) will be available on all vessels
- Minimize noise
 - Reduced speed (see above)
 - Multibeam surveys using ≥ 50 kilohertz frequencies, lowest possible power and ping-rate
 - Single beam surveys using ≥ 30 kilohertz frequencies, lowest possible power and ping-rate, and 12° beam angle.
 - Reduce use of active acoustics as much as possible. Active acoustic sources should be used only when required for navigation or data collection and should be used at the lowest source level and highest frequency available that is suitable for the purpose.
- Minimize vessel discharges (including aquatic nuisance species)
 - Meet all Environmental Protection Agency Vessel General Permits and Coast Guard requirements¹.
 - Avoid discharge of ballast water in designated critical habitat.
 - Use anti-fouling coatings.
 - Clean hull regularly to remove aquatic nuisance species.
 - Avoid cleaning of hull in critical habitat.
 - Avoid cleaners with nonylphenols.
 - Rinse anchor with high-powered hose after retrieval.
- Minimize anchor impact to corals, seagrass or other designated habitat (e.g., Essential Fish Habitat)
 - Use designated anchorage area when available
 - Use mapping data to anchor in mud or sand, to avoid anchoring on corals

¹ See requirements for Vessels General Permits at: <https://www.epa.gov/npdes/vessels-vgp>



- Avoid anchoring in seagrass critical habitat
- Minimize anchor drag
- Avoid collecting bottom samples in seagrass designated critical habitat
 - There will be no bottom sample collections of any kind conducted during this cruise
- Cetaceans
 - Avoid approaching within 200 yards (182.9 meters), 500 yards for right whales.
 - Avoid critical habitat, when possible.
- Sea Turtles and Manatees
 - Avoid approaching within 50 yards.
- Entanglement Protective Measures
 - Use stiff line materials for towing and keep taut during operations to reduce potential for entanglement
 - Reduce knots in the line as much as possible
 - Clearly mark lines in the event an animal does become entangled so that NMFS experts can identify the gear.
- Habitat Protection
 - Avoid contact of gear, towed or lowered, with the sensitive bottom habitat (e.g., submerged aquatic vegetation and hard bottom)

ESA-Listed Species and Designated Critical Habitat Not Affected by the Proposed Action

Upon review of their known range and overlap with the proposed action, we have determined that the following species will not be affected by the proposed action: Gulf sturgeon, smalltooth sawfish, and ESA-listed corals. These species will not be considered further.

Gulf sturgeon could occur within the northern Gulf of Mexico action area. Gulf sturgeon are found in coastal rivers in Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana throughout most of the year, moving into the Gulf of Mexico between September and November to forage over winter. During winter, gulf sturgeon are typically found in nearshore waters two to four meters deep (Fox et al. 2002). Since the research activities will take place primarily in waters greater than 50 meters deep, we do not expect gulf sturgeon to be exposed to the stressors associated with ROV operation and coral sampling. The vessels used for the sampling cruises may transit through waters occupied by gulf sturgeon. However, the proposed action would take place during the summer, when gulf sturgeon are in rivers, not the Gulf of Mexico. Therefore, we do not expect gulf sturgeon to be exposed to stressors associated with vessel activity. We have determined that there will be no effect to gulf sturgeon as a result of the proposed action.

In the United States, smalltooth sawfish are typically found in shallow coastal waters around southern Florida up to ten meters deep (NMFS 2010). Since the proposed action will take place in waters greater than 50 meters deep, we do not expect smalltooth sawfish to be exposed to the proposed action. We have determined that there will be no effect to smalltooth sawfish as a result of the proposed action.

In their concurrence request, the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science identified several species of ESA-listed invertebrates that may be affected by the proposed action. These species included: mountainous star coral (*Orbicella faveolata*), rough cactus coral (*Mycetophyllia ferox*),



boulder star coral (*Orbicella franksi*), lobed star coral (*Orbicella annularis*), pillar coral (*Dendrogyra cylindrus*), staghorn coral (*Acropora cervicornis*) and elkhorn coral (*Acropora palmata*).

Upon examining the current known range of each of these species and the extent of the action area, we determined that these ESA-listed corals occur in some parts of the action area. ESA-listed corals occur in the Caribbean and Florida Keys; there is no confirmed presence of ESA-listed corals in the northern Gulf of Mexico region (Veron 2014). The proposed action is focusing on corals in the deep-water environment at depths greater than 50 meters. ESA-listed corals found in the Caribbean and Florida Keys are found at depths shallower than the proposed action area (Table 2), so we do not expect any ESA-listed coral species to be exposed. Because the proposed action would take place in an environment where we do not expect ESA-listed corals to occur, we conclude that there is no effect of the action to ESA-listed corals.

Table 2. Depth ranges of ESA-listed coral species found in the Caribbean.

ESA-listed Coral Species	Depth	Source
Elkhorn Coral	Usually less than 6 meters; up to 20 meters	(NMFS 2015)
Staghorn Coral	0 to 30 meters	(NMFS 2015)
Mountainous Star Coral	Typically 10 to 20 meters; up to 40 meters	(Holstein et al. 2015)
Boulder Star Coral	1 to 30 meters	(Brainard 2011)
Lobed Star Coral	1 to 30 meters	(Brainard 2011)
Pillar Coral	1 to 25 meters	(Aronson 2008a)
Rough Cactus Coral	5 to 30 meters	(Aronson 2008b)

Several areas of critical habitat have been designated throughout the action area. Designations for smalltooth sawfish, Gulf sturgeon, and the proposed Atlantic sturgeon critical habitat are in shallow coastal areas or in rivers. These areas will not be affected by the proposed action, which will take place in the oceanic, deep-water environment. These areas will not be considered further.

Affected ESA-listed Species and Designated Critical Habitat

The proposed action has the potential to affect ESA-listed species that occur in the waters of the South Atlantic Bight, Caribbean Sea, and Gulf of Mexico. Species or designated critical habitat that may overlap the action area are included in Table 3. Because the action would occur in three distinct areas, each with its own variety of ESA-listed resources, not all species or critical habitat would be affected by the action at any one time. We have identified the potentially affected resources in the table by the three areas: Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic Bight, and Caribbean Sea.

Table 3. Potentially affected ESA-listed species and designated critical habitat.

Species	ESA Status	Critical Habitat	Recovery Plan	Survey area where species are most likely to be affected
Marine Mammals				
Blue whale (<i>Balaenoptera musculus</i>)	E – 35 FR 18319	-- --	07/1998	Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Caribbean
Fin whale (<i>Balaenoptera physalus</i>)	E – 35 FR 18319	-- --	75 FR 47538	Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Caribbean
Sei whale (<i>Balaenoptera borealis</i>)	E – 35 FR 18319	-- --	76 FR 43985	Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Caribbean
Bryde's whale Gulf of Mexico subspecies (<i>Balaenoptera edeni</i>)	E -- 81 FR 88639	-- --	-- --	Gulf of Mexico
North Atlantic Right Whale (<i>Eubalaena glacialis</i>)	E – 73 FR 12024	59 FR 28805 and 81 FR 4837	70 FR 32293	South Atlantic
Sperm whale (<i>Physeter macrocephalus</i>)	E – 35 FR 18319	-- --	75 FR 81584	Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Caribbean
Marine Reptiles				
Green turtle (<i>Chelonia mydas</i>) – North Atlantic DPS	T – 81 FR 20057	63 FR 46693	63 FR 28359	Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Caribbean
Hawksbill turtle (<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>)	E – 35 FR 8491	63 FR 46693	57 FR 38818	Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Caribbean
Kemp's Ridley turtle (<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>)	E – 35 FR 18319	-- --	75 FR 12496	Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Caribbean
Leatherback turtle (<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>)	E – 35 FR 8491	44 FR 17710 and 77 FR 4170	63 FR 28359	Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Caribbean
Loggerhead turtle, (<i>Caretta caretta</i>) – Northwest Atlantic Ocean DPS	T – 76 FR 58868	79 FR 39856	63 FR 28359 74 FR 2995	Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Caribbean
Fishes				
Nassau grouper (<i>Epinephelus striatus</i>)	T – 81 FR 42268	-- --	-- --	Caribbean
Scalloped hammerhead shark (<i>Sphyrna lewini</i>) Central and Southwest Atlantic DPS	T -- 79 FR 38213	-- --	-- --	Caribbean
Atlantic sturgeon, (<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus</i>)	T -- 77 FR 5879	81 FR 35701 (Proposed)*	-- --	South Atlantic



Species	ESA Status	Critical Habitat	Recovery Plan	Survey area where species are most likely to be affected
<i>oxyrinchus</i>) Gulf of Maine DPS				
Atlantic sturgeon, (<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus</i>) New York Bight DPS	E -- 77 FR 5879	81 FR 35701 (Proposed)*	-- --	South Atlantic
Atlantic sturgeon, (<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus</i>) Chesapeake DPS	E -- 77 FR 5879	81 FR 35701 (Proposed)*	-- --	South Atlantic
Atlantic sturgeon, (<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus</i>) Carolina DPS	75 FR 61904	81 FR 36077 (Proposed)*	-- --	South Atlantic
Atlantic sturgeon, (<i>Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus</i>) South Atlantic DPS	75 FR 61904	81 FR 36077 (Proposed)*	-- --	South Atlantic
Oceanic whitetip shark (<i>Carcharhinus longimanus</i>)	T -- 81 FR 96304 (Proposed)	-- --	-- --	Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Caribbean
Giant manta ray (<i>Manta birostris</i>)	T -- 82 FR 3694 (Proposed)	-- --	-- --	Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic, Caribbean

*Critical habitat has been designated, but it will not be affected by the proposed action.

Consultation History

On June 1, 2017, the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science submitted a memorandum requesting a letter of concurrence under the ESA for activities to be conducted on the NCCOS-led field activities to be conducted as part of the Southeast Deep Coral Initiative in 2017 through 2019. On June 22, 2017, the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science submitted a revised memorandum with additional information. The National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science have requested our concurrence that these activities are not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed species or designated critical habitat. NMFS Office of Protected Resources responded on the same date that it received all necessary information.

Effects of the Action

Under the ESA, “effects of the action” means the direct and indirect effects of an action on the ESA-listed species or designated critical habitat, together with the effects of other activities that are interrelated or interdependent with that action (50 CFR §402.02). The applicable standard to find that a proposed action is not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed species or designated critical habitat is that all of the effects of the action are expected to be discountable, insignificant, or completely beneficial. Beneficial effects are contemporaneous positive effects without any adverse effects to the species or critical habitat. Insignificant effects relate to the size of the



impact and should never reach the scale where take occurs. Discountable effects are those extremely unlikely to occur.

Effects of the Action: Vessel Activity

The 2013 biological opinion identified several stressors associated with the Office of Coast Survey's hydrographic surveys in coastal waters. These included vessel activity (strike, acoustic disturbance, vessel presence, discharges, and introduction of aquatic nuisance species). These stressors pose risks to ESA-listed whales, sea turtles, and fishes.

Stressor: Vessel Strike

Because the vessel would move at a very slow speed during the survey, a strike of marine mammals or sea turtles would be improbable and extremely unlikely. Further, adherence to observation and avoidance procedures is also expected to avoid vessel strikes for marine mammals and sea turtles. We also expect ESA-listed fishes to move away from the vessel, and thus a strike would be extremely unlikely. Therefore, effects from vessel strikes during the survey would be discountable for ESA-listed fishes, whales, and sea turtles.

Stressor: Acoustic Disturbance and Vessel Presence

When a vessel transits to and from the survey areas, potential effects on the ESA-listed species include vessel strikes, acoustic disturbance, and disturbance from the vessel's presence. Combined vessel noise and presence could cause slight marine mammal or sea turtle response or behavioral interruptions, but they would be minor and temporary as the vessel moves away from any marine mammals or sea turtles. The distance between the vessel and observed marine mammals and sea turtles, per avoidance protocols, would also minimize the potential for acoustic disturbance from engine noise. Therefore, effects from acoustic disturbance or presence associated with vessels would be insignificant for ESA-listed whales and sea turtles.

ESA-listed fishes such as all five Atlantic sturgeon DPSs, Nassau grouper, Central and Southwest Atlantic DPS scalloped hammerhead sharks, oceanic whitetip sharks, and giant manta rays might occur in the action area and be exposed to the stressors associated with vessel activity.

Central and Southwest Atlantic DPS scalloped hammerhead sharks, oceanic whitetip sharks and giant manta rays occupy tropical and subtropical oceanic waters. Oceanic whitetip sharks can be found at the ocean surface, but most frequently stay between 25.5 and 50 meters deep (Carlson and Gulak 2012; Young 2016). Giant manta rays are found at depths less than ten meters during the day (Miller 2016). Scalloped hammerhead sharks can be found to depths of 1,000 meters. We expect that scalloped hammerhead sharks, giant manta rays, and whitetip oceanic sharks will, for the most part, be at depths where there will be minimal risk of vessel strike or exposure to noise.

When in the marine environment, Atlantic sturgeon adults and sub-adults typically occupy shallow marine waters, less than 15 meters deep (Dunton et al. 2015; Erickson et al. 2011). The proposed action would take place in summer months, placing Atlantic sturgeon largely out of the area where most of the vessel activity and research will occur.



Nassau grouper typically associate with coral reefs, with juveniles occupying shallow reef habitat, and adults occupying deep reefs (NMFS 2013). The vessels in use for the proposed action would be too large to enter shallow waters, and we expect that any exposed Nassau grouper would move away from the vessels.

The vessel's passage past an ESA-listed fish would be brief and not likely to be significant in impacting any individual's ability to feed, reproduce, or avoid predators. Because the potential acoustic interference from engine noise would be undetectable or so minor that it could not be meaningfully evaluated, we find that the risk from this potential stressor is insignificant. Therefore, we conclude that acoustic interference from engine noise is not likely to adversely affect any ESA-listed fishes.

Stressor: Discharges

The potential for discharges via fuel or oil leakages is extremely unlikely. An oil or fuel leak would likely pose a significant risk to the vessel and its crew and actions to correct a leak should occur immediately to the extent possible. In the event that a leak should occur, the amount of fuel and oil onboard the research vessel is unlikely to cause widespread, high dose contamination (excluding the remote possibility of severe damage to the vessel) that would impact listed species directly or pose hazards to their food sources. Because the potential for fuel or oil leakage is extremely unlikely to occur, we find that the risk from discharges to any ESA-listed species is discountable.

Stressor: Aquatic Nuisance Species

To minimize the risk of aquatic nuisance species introduction, personnel would: avoid discharge of ballast water in designated critical habitat; use anti-fouling coatings; clean the hull regularly to remove aquatic nuisance species (but avoid doing so in critical habitat), and rinse the anchor with a high-powered hose after retrieval. These protective measures go beyond the requirements of the Vessel and Small Vessel General Permits², as described in the mitigation measures above. Furthermore, the vessels would not transit outside of the United States; therefore, they would not introduce foreign aquatic nuisance species. Given the protective measures, it is highly unlikely that the vessels would transfer aquatic nuisance species to any ESA-listed species during the proposed action. We find that the risk from aquatic nuisance species to any ESA-listed species is discountable.

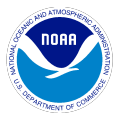
Conclusion

Therefore, we conclude that the effects from vessel activity, pollution by oil or fuel leakage, and risk of aquatic nuisance species introduction are insignificant or discountable, and not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed marine mammals, sea turtles, or fishes.

Effects of the Action: Deployment and Operation of Survey Equipment

The proposed action includes the operation of equipment such as the remotely operated vehicles and CTD casts that could be potential stressors for ESA-listed species. The ROVs will be used to collect coral samples, and the CTD casts will be used to collect water samples and data.

² See requirements for the Vessels General Permit at: <https://www.epa.gov/npdes/vessels-vgp>



ROVs have acoustic tracking devices on them that emit sound which could be detected by and impact ESA-listed species. The effects of sound from the ROV operation will be discussed in the section below.

Stressor: Operation of Remotely Operated Vehicle and CTD Cast

A ROV is an underwater observation vehicle connected to a computer operated by personnel on board the ship. The operator directs the ROV to use its camera to photograph the sea floor. The ROV is tethered at all times. The CTD cast is lowered into the ocean by a power winch and is tethered the entire time.

Possible stressors from the ROV and CTD cast during the proposed activities include entanglement from the tether during operation, equipment strike (which could include hitting coral reefs, substrate, or an ESA-listed species while in the water column).

The ROV is controlled by an operator who would have visual of the surroundings during operation and would avoid interaction with ESA-listed species by navigating the ROV away from the organism, thereby reducing the likelihood that the ROV would strike any ESA-listed resource while in use. In addition to the camera, the ROV has navigational equipment (e.g., depth, heading, altitude), allowing the operator to avoid striking bottom. To reduce the risk of entanglement from the tether attached to the ROV, the Office of Coast Survey proposed mitigation measures. These include using a stiff line material, keeping the line taut during operations and reducing knots in the line as much as possible. Therefore, the risks of strike or entanglement to ESA-listed species from ROV use are discountable.

Unlike the ROV, the CTD cast would not have a camera on it while in use. Before deploying the CTD cast, researchers would use the echosounder to ensure that the water depth is greater than the maximum depth of the CTD cast. This would prevent the CTD cast from striking bottom. While there is some possibility that a CTD cast could strike an ESA-listed species while being lowered into the ocean, we consider that possibility to be extremely unlikely. Another stressor from the CTD cast would be risk of entanglement from the tether. Similar to the ROV, researchers would use a stiff line material, keeping the line taut during operations and reducing knots in the line as much as possible. Therefore, the risks of strike or entanglement to ESA-listed species from CTD cast are discountable.

Stressor: Sound Sources

Devices such as multibeam echosounders and ROVs would be in use and emit sound which could be within the hearing range of ESA-listed whales, sea turtles, and fishes. There are up to five different types of multibeam echosounders that could be used during the proposed action, each with a different operating frequency (Table 4).

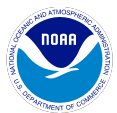


Table 4. Operating frequencies of acoustic devices in the proposed action.

Vessel	Device	Operating Frequency
NOAA Ship <i>Okeanos Explorer</i>	Kongsberg EM-302	30 kHz
	Kongsberg/Simrad EK-60	38, 120, and 200 kHz
NOAA Ship <i>Nancy Foster</i>	Reson 7125 SV2	200 or 400 kHz
	Simrad EM 1002	95 kHz
	Kongsberg EM 710	65 to 100 kHz
	Kongsberg/Simrad EK-60	38, 120, and 200 kHz

The ROVs proposed for use in the proposed action are equipped with various devices used to locate and operate the ROV. The ROVs are equipped with acoustic tracking equipment which operates at frequencies between eight and 30 kilohertz. The ROV or research vessel's acoustic telemetry systems could have transponder units, altimeters, and/or sonar that would operate at frequencies and emit sound that could be within the functional hearing range of ESA-listed sea turtles, fishes, and marine mammals (Table 5).

Table 5. Functional hearing ranges of species in the action area.

Species/Group	Functional Hearing Range	Source
Low frequency cetaceans (Baleen whales)	7 Hz to 25 kHz	(NMFS 2016)
Mid-frequency cetaceans (Toothed whales)	150 Hz to 160 kHz	(NMFS 2016)
Sea turtles (general)	Less than 1 kHz	(Moein et al. 1994)
Loggerhead sea turtles	250 Hz to 750 Hz	(Bartol et al. 1999)
Kemp's ridley sea turtles	100 Hz to 500 Hz	(Ketten and Bartol 2005)
Green sea turtles	100 Hz to 800 Hz	(Ketten and Bartol 2005)
Elasmobranchs (Lemon sharks and horn sharks)	20 Hz to 1,000 Hz	(Casper and Mann 2006)

The functional hearing ranges of ESA-listed sea turtles are not well understood and vary by species. In general, the available information on sea turtle hearing indicates that their hearing thresholds are less than 1 kilohertz (Moein et al. 1994). Loggerhead sea turtles are thought to have a functional hearing range of 250 to 750 hertz (Bartol et al. 1999), Kemp's ridley sea turtles a range of 100 to 500 hertz, and green sea turtles 100 to 800 hertz (Ketten and Bartol 2005). The operating frequencies of the ROV telemetry devices (i.e., transponder units, altimeters, and sonar) and the multibeam echosounders are outside the functional hearing range of ESA-listed



sea turtles, meaning that sound associated with their operation is discountable, therefore, not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed sea turtles.

Mid-frequency toothed whales, including the ESA-listed sperm whale, have a functional hearing range of 150 hertz to 160 kilohertz. The Simrad EM 1002, Kongsberg/Simrad EK-60, and the Kongsberg EM-302 would operate at frequencies within the hearing range of sperm whales.

Sperm whales have been observed in the continental slope waters north of Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, in waters 1000 meters or deeper. Sperm whale densities in this area are higher during summer months (Mullin and Fulling 2004; Waring et al. 2006). The survey would be south of where we expect sperm whales to occur in high densities. As such, we believe it is very unlikely that sperm whales would be exposed to the proposed action. The minimization measures further reduce the likelihood of exposure. Multibeam echosounder transmissions would be suspended when ESA-listed whales are within range. The research vessel would also avoid approaching cetaceans within 200 yards (600 feet). Due to the minimization measures and that it is unlikely that sperm whales would be present in the action area, we conclude that the effects of the proposed action to sperm whales would be discountable, and sperm whales not likely to be adversely affected.

The functional hearing range of ESA-listed baleen whales (Gulf of Mexico Bryde's whale, blue, fin and sei whales) is 7 hertz to 25 kilohertz. The multibeam echosounders operate outside the functional hearing range of these whales, meaning that operation of these devices are not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed baleen whales.

The altimeters (500 kilohertz) and sonar systems (675 kilohertz) associated with the ROVs proposed for use will be outside the functional hearing range of ESA-listed baleen whales. As a result, the risk of effects to ESA-listed baleen whales from exposure to sound associated with the operations of altimeters and sonar systems are discountable, and are not likely to adversely affect these species. However, the transponder units for the acoustic tracking systems are within the hearing range of ESA-listed baleen whales. The transponder units for the acoustic tracking systems operate at between eight and 30 kilohertz or 21.5 and 43.2 kilohertz, putting these devices in the functional hearing range of ESA-listed baleen whales (Gulf of Mexico bryde's, blue, fin and sei whales). We expect that ESA-listed species will avoid the vessel and ROV, minimizing the exposure to sound from the ROV operation and the multibeam echosounders. Generally, we expect that ESA-listed whales to move away from or parallel to the vessel (Hauser and Holst 2009). The minimization measures further reduce the likelihood of exposure. We conclude that the effects of the proposed action to ESA-listed baleen whales would be discountable, and not likely to be adversely affected.

The functional hearing ranges of ESA-listed fishes are not well understood. Oceanic whitetip sharks, scalloped hammerhead sharks, and giant manta rays are elasmobranchs, and although there is no known information on the hearing ability of these species specifically, other species of elasmobranchs have been studied. Hearing ranges of lemon sharks and horn sharks are between 20 hertz and one kilohertz (Casper and Mann 2006), and we assume that the hearing range of oceanic whitetip sharks and giant manta rays are within this range as well. The altimeters, sonar systems, and transponder units for the acoustic tracking system for the ROV are



not in the hearing range of elasmobranchs, and thus not within the range of scalloped hammerhead sharks, oceanic whitetip sharks and giant manta rays. The multibeam echosounders all operate at frequencies above one kilohertz, and thus not in the hearing range of ESA-listed sharks.

Information available about the hearing abilities of Atlantic sturgeon come from studies of other species of sturgeon. All five DPSs are considered in this analysis since Atlantic sturgeon from multiple river systems “mix” in the marine environment (Wirgin et al. 2015a; Wirgin et al. 2015b). Meyer et al. (2010) recorded auditory evoked potentials to pure tone stimuli of varying frequency and intensity in lake sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) have best sensitivity from 50 to 400 hertz. Lovell et al. (2005) also studied sound reception in and the hearing abilities of paddlefish (*Polyodon spathula*) and lake sturgeon in pressure dominated and particle motion dominated sound fields. They concluded that both species were responsive to sounds ranging in frequency from 100 to 500 hertz with lowest hearing thresholds from frequencies in bandwidths between 200 and 300 hertz and higher thresholds at 100 and 500 hertz. Based on this information, we conclude that the multibeam echosounders and the systems associated with the ROVs operate outside the functional hearing range of Atlantic sturgeon. The effects are insignificant, and Atlantic sturgeon are not likely to be adversely affected.

There are limited data on sound production in Nassau grouper; other species of grouper have been studied and summarized here. Nassau grouper sound production, or “grunts”, involves contraction of a bilateral post-opercular muscle that is connected to the swim bladder (Hazlett 1962). Nelson et al. (2011) reported on red grouper sound production in Florida using passive acoustic and video monitoring. Red grouper produce low-frequency pulses, broadband pulses and pulse trains, as well as short calls labelled as “growls” with their dominant frequency at about 180 hertz (Nelson et al. 2011). Based on this information, we conclude that the multibeam echosounders and the systems associated with the ROVs operate outside the functional hearing range of Nassau grouper. The effects are insignificant, and Nassau grouper are not likely to be adversely affected.

Due to the minimization measures and the expected avoidance behavior of ESA-listed species, we believe that the proposed use of the multibeam echosounders, ROVs, and those associated sound sources would have insignificant effects, if any, on ESA-listed species. Therefore, the effects from sound associated with ROV use and its operation are not likely to adversely affect ESA-listed whales, sea turtles, or fishes.

Effects of the Action: Designated Critical Habitat

The proposed action may occur within critical habitats that have been designated for loggerhead sea turtle Northwest Atlantic Ocean DPS, green turtle North Atlantic DPS, hawksbill and leatherback sea turtles, elkhorn and staghorn corals, and North Atlantic right whale.

Critical habitat for the Northwest Atlantic Ocean distinct population segment of loggerhead sea turtles is designated in several units off the southeastern coast of the United States, within the proposed action area, specifically, the *Sargassum* habitat. Other units of designated critical habitat for loggerhead sea turtles, such as nearshore reproductive, foraging, breeding, migratory,



or winter units, are outside the action area. The essential biological features for *Sargassum* habitat include:

1. Convergence zones, surface-water downwelling areas, margins of major boundary currents (Gulf Stream), and other locations where there are concentrated components of the *Sargassum* community in water temperatures suitable for optimal growth of *Sargassum* and inhabitation of loggerheads.
2. *Sargassum* in concentrations that support adequate prey abundance and cover.
3. Available prey and other material associated with *Sargassum* habitat including plants and cyanobacteria and animals native to the *Sargassum* community.
4. Sufficient water depth and proximity to available currents to ensure offshore transport (out of the surf zone), and foraging and cover requirements by *Sargassum* for post-hatchling loggerheads, i.e., greater than ten meters depth.

The proposed action will involve vessel activity, ROV operation, bathymetric data acquisition, and coral and water sample collection. These activities will not affect the oceanic features, prey abundance, cover, water depth, or other essential biological features for loggerhead *Sargassum* critical habitat. Therefore, we conclude that there will be no effect from the proposed action to loggerhead designated critical habitat.

Critical habitat has been designated for hawksbill sea turtles in Puerto Rico, around the coastal waters adjacent to Mona and Monito Islands, and may be exposed to the proposed action. Critical habitat has been designated for green sea turtles in Culebra Island, Puerto Rico. No primary constituent elements were identified in either designation, but several activities were identified as requiring special management considerations. These include vessel traffic, coastal construction, point and non-point source pollution, fishing activities, dredge and fill activities, and habitat restoration. The proposed action will include vessel activity, and therefore does require special management consideration with regard to hawksbill and green sea turtle designated critical habitat. The rule includes a discussion of vessel traffic potentially affecting designated critical habitat, specifically, propeller dredging and anchor mooring disrupting benthic habitats by crushing coral, breaking seagrass root systems, and severing rhizomes. Recreational boating may also trample seagrass beds and live bottom, and disturb seagrasses and coral. The vessel operators will use mapping data to avoid anchoring on sensitive bottom types like coral reefs and seagrasses. The ROV would be operated to avoid hitting bottom. We believe it is extremely unlikely that the large research vessels, which have a 13.5-foot and 20-foot draft, would be in such shallow waters as to damage benthic habitats with its propeller. We conclude that the proposed action would not destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat for green and hawksbill sea turtles.

Critical habitat has been designated for leatherback sea turtles in the coastal waters adjacent to St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands, and may be exposed to the proposed action. No primary constituent elements were identified in the designation, but several activities were identified as those that might modify critical habitat. These include recreational boating and swimming, and sandmining. The proposed action will include vessel activity, ROV operation, bathymetric data acquisition, and coral and water sample collection. These activities are not identified as ones that



can modify the critical habitat. We conclude that the proposed action would not be likely to destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat for leatherback sea turtles.

Critical habitat has been designated for elkhorn and staghorn coral in the Florida Keys, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Designated critical habitat for these species is within the action area, specifically the South Atlantic Bight and the Caribbean Sea. The essential biological features for the designation includes substrate of suitable quality and availability to support successful larval settlement and recruitment, and reattachment and recruitment of fragments. The proposed action will involve vessel activity, ROV operation, bathymetric data acquisition, and coral and water sample collection. These activities will not involve altering the availability or quality of substrate. The researchers will use designated anchorage areas and use mapping data to only anchor in appropriate areas (e.g., mud or sand). We conclude that the proposed action would not be likely to destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat for elkhorn and staghorn coral.

Critical habitat for North Atlantic right whales is designated within the action area, in the marine waters extending from Cape Fear, North Carolina to approximately 27 nautical miles below Cape Canaveral, Florida. This unit was designated as a calving area for North Atlantic right whales. Essential features for North Atlantic right whale critical habitat include:

- Calm sea surface conditions of Force Four or less on the Beaufort Wind Scale,
- Sea surface temperatures from a minimum of seven degrees Celsius and never more than 17 degree Celsius, and
- Water depths of six to 28 meters, where these features simultaneously co-occur over contiguous areas of at least 231 nautical miles squared of ocean waters during the months of November through April.

The proposed action would not entail activities that affect the essential features of the critical habitat, because the activities would not affect oceanographic conditions. We conclude that the proposed action would not be likely to destroy or adversely modify designated critical habitat for North Atlantic right whales.

Conclusion

Based on this analysis, NMFS concurs with National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science's determination that all effects of the proposed action are not likely to adversely affect the subject ESA-listed species and/or designated critical habitats.

Reinitiation of Consultation

Reinitiation of consultation is required and shall be requested by the Federal agency, or by NMFS, where discretionary Federal involvement or control over the action has been retained or is authorized by law and (1) new information reveals effects of the action that may affect an ESA-listed species or designated critical habitat in a manner or to an extent not previously considered; (2) the identified action is subsequently modified in a manner that causes an effect to the ESA-listed species or designated critical habitat that was not considered in this concurrence letter; or if (3) a new species is listed or critical habitat designated that may be affected by the identified action (50 CFR §402.16).



Please direct questions regarding this letter to Colette Cairns, consulting biologist, NMFS' Office of Protected Resources, at (301) 427-8414 or colette.cairns@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,



Cathryn E. Tortorici
Chief, ESA Interagency Cooperation Division,
Office of Protected Resources

cc: Paula Whitfield; National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, National Ocean Service



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Appendix E: EFH Consultation Letter




UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
Southeast Regional Office
263 13th Avenue South
St. Petersburg, Florida 33701-5505
<http://sero.nmfs.noaa.gov>

June 15, 2017

F/SER4:DD

MEMORANDUM FOR: Steven Thur, Ph.D.
Deputy Director, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science

FROM: Virginia M. Fay  /for
Assistant Regional Administrator, Habitat Conservation Division

SUBJECT: Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) Consultation for activities to be
conducted as part of the Southeast Deep Sea Coral Initiative in
2017-2019

This responds to the request for an EFH review of the subject action. During this project, National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) researchers will lead field efforts that will map, survey and sample deep-sea coral ecosystems throughout the Southeast U.S., a region including the U.S. federal waters of the Gulf of Mexico, South Atlantic Bight and Caribbean Sea. These efforts will be conducted on research expeditions aboard the NOAA Ship *Nancy Foster* in 2017-2019 (3 years), as well as on the NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer* in 2018-2019 (2 years). Specifically, these efforts will (1) survey deep-sea coral ecosystems using remotely operated vehicles (ROV), (2) map deep-water habitats using multibeam echosounders, and (3) sample the physical and chemical properties of the water column via the deployment of CTD-casts and collection of water samples.

As specified in the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA), EFH consultation is required for federal actions which may adversely affect EFH. As the federal action agency in this matter, the NCCOS has determined the proposed activities would not adversely affect EFH. The Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) has reviewed the proposed activities as well as the protective measures and best management practices incorporated into the action. In our assessment of overall activity including the experimental design, nature of the collection, and limited scope of subject activity the HCD has no EFH conservation recommendations to provide pursuant to Section 305(b)(2) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Further EFH consultation on this action is not necessary unless future modifications are proposed and you believe that resulting activities may result in adverse impacts to EFH.

Be advised the harvest and possession of coral is prohibited by current federal fishing regulations in the Gulf of Mexico. NCCOS should contact Susan Gerhart (Susan.Gerhart@noaa.gov), Chief of the Southeast Region's Sustainable Fisheries Division Gulf of Mexico Branch, to apply for a letter of acknowledgment (LOA) of scientific research activities. LOAs are issued by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) under the authority of the MSFCMA for situations where research activities would normally be in violation of federal fishing regulations. The NMFS indicates its acknowledgment by issuing a LOA specifying the activities are scientific research, and therefore, exempt from the fishing regulations developed under the MSFCMA.

cc:
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File



**Ocean Exploration
and Research**

PAG

Appendix F: NASA Maritime Aerosols Network Survey of Opportunity

Survey or Project Name

Maritime Aerosol Network

Lead POC or Principle Investigator (PI & Affiliation)

POC: Dr. Alexander Smirnov

Supporting Team Members Ashore

Supporting Team Members Aboard (if required)

Activities Description(s)(Include goals, objectives and tasks)

The Maritime Aerosol Network (MAN) component of AERONET provides ship-borne aerosol optical depth measurements from the Microtops II sun photometers. These data provide an alternative to observations from islands as well as establish validation points for satellite and aerosol transport models. Since 2004, these instruments have been deployed periodically on ships of opportunity and research vessels to monitor aerosol properties over the World Oceans.



Appendix G: CITES Permit

Not Required for this expedition



**Ocean Exploration
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Appendix H: UCH Standard Operating Procedures

NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research Operational Policy and Procedures for Underwater Cultural Heritage Missions Conducted onboard the NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer*

IV. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for OER mission activities conducted aboard the NOAA Ship Okeanos Explorer, when such mission activities involve either unexpected discovery or targeted exploration of potential Underwater Cultural Heritage sites.

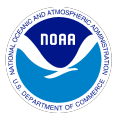
II. Background

Since the inception of NOAA's ocean exploration program in 2000, OER data management practices have been guided by the 2000 President's Panel Report recommendations, which prioritized rapid and unrestricted data sharing as one of five critical exploration program components. More recently Public law 111-11 [Section XII Subtitle A Part 1 Exploration] reinforced and expanded OER data management objectives, continuing to stress the importance of sharing unique exploration data and information to improve public understanding of the oceans, and for research and management purposes.

OER missions conducted aboard the NOAA Ship Okeanos Explorer offer a 'best-case' scenario for meeting Program mission objectives related to data sharing:

- Dedicated shipboard and shore-side teams work in tandem to ensure near-real time data product generation from shipboard and ROV sensors;
- Telepresence is used to share data products and information in real-time with shore-side participants and the public;
- Mission information is publically communicated in real time via Internet access to streamed video and related resources; and
- Data are managed throughout the lifecycle in accordance with all applicable policy directives and community best practices.

The nature of exploration defines the possibility of discovery, including unexpectedly exposing the location of underwater cultural resources; on some occasions, exploration targets are specifically focused on the exploration of suspected underwater cultural heritage (UCH) sites.



The need to protect the location of suspected UCH sites until they are fully understood, whether purposefully explored or fortuitously discovered, is an important statutory responsibility. In the case of OER expeditions aboard the Okeanos Explorer, a range of operational procedures must be modified to ensure this protection occurs to the fullest extent possible. The following sections of this document define the methods for ensuring protection of these sensitive data throughout the data lifecycle.

III. Authority

- a. **Marine Archaeology:** This document is informed by: the Federal archaeology program; U.S. legislation on the treatment of cultural remains; and the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage.

The NOAA Office of Ocean Exploration and Research (OER) supports the standards for conducting marine archaeological activities enumerated in the Annex Rules of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage.

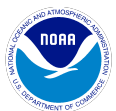
Preservation and protection of prehistoric and historic cultural resources is the policy of the Federal government and OER has a responsibility to consider the effects of its activities on these resources. If data is found to be sensitive because it reveals the location of a historically significant cultural resource, Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act provides that the head of a Federal agency or other public official shall withhold from public disclosure information about the location, character, or ownership of a historic property when disclosure may: cause a significant invasion of privacy; risk harm to the historic property; or impede the use of a traditional religious site by practitioners. This document will use the term Underwater Cultural Heritage, or UCH, to refer to historic and prehistoric traces of human existence that are totally or partially underwater.

- b. **Data Management:** Geospatial data are considered a national capital asset. National policy and international standards guide data management best practices to ensure timely and broad public accessibility to these data. Within NOAA, data management practices are informed by NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 212-15 Management of Environmental Data and Information, which states in part:

Environmental data will be visible, accessible and independently understandable to users, except where limited by law, regulation, policy (such as those applicable to personally identifiable information or protected critical infrastructure information or proprietary trade information) or by security requirements.

Sensitive UCH data collections require special handling while determinations are made as to whether each location will be nominated and will qualify for protection under the NHPA Section 304. OER considers these data to fall within the scope of the NAO 212-15 exceptions during this period.

IV. Roles and Responsibilities



Particular to the NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer*, there are many methods employed to ensure rapid and broad data access. When the goal is to restrict access to precise positional information, several operational scenarios must be considered. Alternate operating procedures are then developed for:

- Real time operations:
 - Routine data transmissions and events that broadcast the ship position
 - Seafloor mapping operations and data production
 - Telepresence-enabled ROV operations
 - Video annotations and production
 - Public broadcast operations via website and maps
- Post-cruise data management

This table summarizes the roles and responsibilities of each Team Lead in implementing the policy through the management approaches described herein and the SOPs as defined in the Appendices.

MISSION PERSONNEL (Coordinated by: Expedition Coordinator)	
Responsible Team	Accountable for these (primary) actions
Expedition Coordinator	Notification of NDA to Mission Personnel ID , communicate and enforce UCH buffer zone Coordinate with Team leads and key personnel / ensure SOP compliance
Seafloor Mapping Team	Segregate raw and processed data into marked files so that restricted data are held separately and are clearly marked
Telepresence Team	Ensure broadcast data is free of any positional information
Video Team	Ensure UCH Dives and dive products are annotated as such; ensure all raw data and products are not geo-referenced
Data Management Team	Ensure all UCH data are appropriately segregated and documented. Follow post cruise and archive procedures as specified.
Communications Team	Ensure all communications are controlled through one primary POC; ensure communications are not geo-referenced.
<i>Okeanos Explorer</i> Operations (Coordinated by: CO or Designee)	
OMAO Operations	Notification to crew of NDA responsibilities Stop SCS events (email notifications) upon entering buffer zone; Start SCS events (email notifications) upon exiting buffer zone



V. Appendices: Standard Operating Procedures

Appendix A: MAPPING OPERATIONS

The following outlines the process for pre-cruise planning, mapping field operations, post-cruise follow up, and data archival procedures for the following scenarios:

- When UCH is unexpectedly discovered on a standard, non-UCH targeted mapping cruise
- When a cruise is specifically targeted at UCH.
- When an Isolated UCH survey is conducted as part of a broader cruise
- Large survey over UCH area with potential to contain multiple instances of UCH

A. Pre-Cruise Planning

1. Standard Mapping Pre-Cruise Planning

- a.** This section does not affect normal pre-cruise or data management processes for standard mapping cruises that are not conducting targeted UCH mapping. During pre-cruise planning the EX Cruise Coordinator is advised to consult with the OER Marine Archaeologist to discuss possible UCH targets in the mission area. The mapping team may be requested to optimize line planning as necessary to detect UCH and to process data, when possible, to a smaller non-standard grid size to create higher resolution mapping products to provide better images of potential UCH. If so, follow guidance in the UCH Mapping Pre-Cruise Planning section below.

2. UCH Mapping Pre-Cruise Planning

- a.** Background information - The EX mapping team should be supplied with information about targets in the survey area that will help in their detection and identification. This information will be supplied by OER's marine archaeologist and collaborating archaeologists.
- b.** Data processing and data products - Archaeologists involved with the survey will consult with the mapping team to discuss data processing and data products that will increase the potential to discover UCH. The cruise coordinator and mapping team lead will work with OER's marine archaeologist to coordinate this activity.
- c.** Consultation and data sensitivities - Cruise planning must also include a discussion on data sensitivity and data management/archiving. It is the appropriate time to collaborate with other Federal and state agencies that may have a legal or management interest in potential UCH in the survey area. The risks to the resources should be weighed to inform a post-cruise decision on whether or not UCH with potential historical or cultural significance should have information about their location restricted from public release. This should be a collaborative discussion that includes OER's marine archaeologist, cruise coordinator and cruise data manager along with cultural resource managers and archaeologists from other agencies with an interest in the UCH. Agencies that may have an interest include the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries (ONMS) Maritime Heritage Program, Bureau



of Ocean Energy Management, Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement, U.S. Navy History and Heritage Command, National Park Service, State Historic Preservation Officers, and others. While planning expeditions in any foreign country the host government should be made aware of the potential to discover UCH.

- d.** In survey areas where an agency has responsibility for UCH, the data management team should carry out a consultation process with the agency to identify any special protocols that should be put in place to conform with the policies of the agency and these should be incorporated into the data management plan. The expedition coordinator is responsible for the overall execution of the data management plan.
- e.** On mapping missions within the National Marine Sanctuary System, pre-cruise discussions between the EX Cruise Coordinator and ONMS should include the ONMS Director of the Maritime Heritage Program (MHP) and the maritime heritage coordinator at the sanctuary site. They will help determine the sensitivity of data and data products.

B. Mapping Field Operations

1. Standard Mapping Field Operations

- a.** While standard mapping field operations are not affected by the marine archaeology SOP, any features which appear to be of cultural or historical significance, and appear anthropogenic in origin, do require special consideration. Cultural features include wrecks of ships or aircraft, the recognizable debris from wrecks, evidence of previous human settlements, or other items which may appear anthropogenic in origin and have some associated cultural or historical significance.
- b.** The EX Cruise Coordinator will consult with OER's marine archaeologist immediately on the discovery of UCH in the field. The Cruise Coordinator should provide an image and location information by email. The OER marine archaeologist may request special data products that have higher resolutions than standard data products to aid in characterizing UCH.
- c.** If UCH is determined not to be historically or culturally significant or it is determined that no harm will result by disclosing position information, no change to standard mapping field procedures is required.
- d.** If UCH is historically significant or potential to be historically significant, data and data products should be held from public release until reviewed for sensitivity as applicable under the National Historic Preservation Act and other pertinent legislation and regulations, prior to releasing data to a public archive.
- e.** The expedition coordinator is responsible for the overall execution of the data management plan.
- f.** When appropriate, OER's marine archaeologist will contact relevant entities to notify them of the discovery and consult with them regarding the significance of the UCH.



2. UCH Targeted Mapping Field Operations

- a.** No informal information about UCH should be released to the general public by the ship or personnel. This includes posting information and images on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter or personal blogs. Mapping data will be released to the public following the normal process and announcement of discoveries will be made through the appropriate offices and public affairs officials.
- b.** A five-mile buffer zone shall be created around the UCH isolated survey box. The following steps will be taken just prior to entering the buffer zone in order to stop broadcasting the ship's location while the survey is conducted:
 - i. NOAA Shiptracker: Disable the SCS feed from the ship going to Shiptracker
 - ii. Automated Information System (AIS): NOAA requires that the AIS feed which broadcasts information about the ship, including position, course and speed, must remain on at all times for collision avoidance and other safety reasons. Although the [International Maritime Organization's](#) (IMO) Maritime Safety Committee condemns the Internet publication of AIS data, it is easily available for viewing. During the cruise planning phase the Expedition Coordinator will provide the AIS broadcast range on the EX to the chief scientist and science team. The Chief scientist, the science team, or other parties involved in a UCH mapping cruise should be made aware of this and decide whether the value of the operation merits acceptance of the potential issues/outcomes imposed.
 - iii. Telepresence Video Feeds: Do not stream any feeds that include a visible ship location, for example the multi-beam acquisition screen does not high enough resolution over the video feed to see ship position. Streams include but not limited to the SCS data screen, or any active mapping data acquisition screens, or video feeds. It is acceptable to stream video feeds that do not include the ship's location.
 - iv. The Cruise Coordinator will ensure the survey department takes steps to distinguish and separate UCH mapping data from non-UCH mapping data as appropriate.
 - v. Raw Multibeam Data Acquisition: Raw data will be logged in the standard folder structure on the multibeam acquisition computer. Raw data will be copied into a "Restricted" folder in the RAW data network folder structure. Data acquisition and processing logs will clearly state which files are restricted.
 - vi. Multibeam Data Field Processing: Restricted files will be processed and gridded separately from other non-restricted data and will be clearly labeled as such in projects and filenames. The products will be created according to normal field quality-control procedures, but will not be sent to shore with the daily products, in order to not become publicly available via normal channels (FTP / Digital Atlas).
 - vii. Raw EK 60 and Subbottom Data Acquisition: Raw data will be logged in



the standard folder structure on the acquisition computers. Raw data will be copied into a 'Restricted' folder on the RAW and CRUISE DATA data network folder structure. Data acquisition and processing logs will clearly state which files are restricted.

- viii. Cruise Data Transfer (EX to UNH) Package: In the Cruise Data Package carried from the ship by the Mapping Team Lead, a "Restricted" top-level directory will be added in the cruise data folder. Within the "Restricted" folder the same directory structure as the unrestricted folder will be repeated (i.e. SCS, CTD, Multibeam, Imagery, etc).
 - ix. CTD and XBT operations conducted within the buffer zone do not need to be isolated from non-UCH data, or repressed from the *Okeanos* Atlas. CTD and XBT files should follow the normal unrestricted processing procedures and archiving.
 - x. Daily updates are normally linked to the location of the ship at the time the update is posted. If daily updates are made during UCH surveys, no position shall be provided. If a position is required, the position should be posted as it makes sense, 5 miles outside of the extent of the survey area.
- c.** Normal transmissions from the ship shall resume after the EX finishes UCH survey operations and exits the 5-mile buffer zone. Exiting the buffer zone should occur at approximately the same location as entry to prevent obvious data location gaps pointing to UCH location.

C. Post-Cruise Follow Up

1. Information Release

- a.** No informal information about UCH should be released to the general public by the ship or personnel. This includes posting information and images on social networking sites like Facebook or personal blogs. Mapping data will be released to the public following the normal process and announcement of discoveries will be made through the appropriate offices and public affairs officials.

2. Standard Mapping Cruise follow-up where UCH is discovered

- a.** The mapping team will provide a brief summary of the survey and target that includes a description of the survey, water depth, site location, site dimensions, bottom type, and images of the target at the best available resolution.
- b.** The EX Cruise Coordinator and the OER Marine Archaeologist have an initial consultation to discuss the nature of the UCH and its potential significance. This consultation may include other agencies or entities.
- c.** If UCH is determined not to be historically significant no change to standard data management procedures is required.
- d.** If UCH has the potential for historical significance but it is determined that no



harm will result by disclosing position information, such as UCH in deep water, no change to standard data management procedures is required.

- e.** If UCH has potential historical significance and disclosing information about the site poses a threat, further discussions will be held on how to minimize potential harmful impacts, including data management decisions outlined in Data Archiving section of this document. The EX cruise Coordinator, a representative from the data management team, OER's marine archaeologist, a representative from the ONMS Maritime Heritage Program, and any parties with jurisdiction, management or other legal ties to the resource shall meet to determine what measures are needed to protect the UCH while minimizing impacts on the distribution of data and data products.

3. UCH Targeted Mapping Cruise Follow-Up

- a.** The mapping team will create a survey report that provides technical details on the survey, data processing and data products. It should contain a list of targets that includes site location, water depth, site dimensions, bottom type/topography, and images of the target at the best available resolution. Other helpful products include SD and kmz files.
- b.** The EX cruise coordinator, OER's marine archaeologist, a representative from the ONMS Maritime Heritage Program, archaeologists involved in the survey, and any parties with jurisdiction, management or other legal ties to the resource shall meet to discuss the potential historical significance of the UCH and the sensitivities of releasing data to the public that can be protected under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
- c.** The outcome of this meeting will determine if it is necessary to protect site location information from public release.
- d.** When data can be released
 - i.** If the findings determine that releasing information and data on UCH is not a threat, development of products and data management should follow the guidelines for a standard mapping cruise.
- e.** When data should be protected
 - i.** If it is determined that a site is or has potential to be historically significant and eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, the location and data containing the location should not be released to the public.
 - ii.** Data products that contain position information will be forwarded to the EX data management team where data and products will be stored in an archive with restricted access.
 - iii.** Cruise plans, cruise reports, situation reports, mapping summary reports and other documents that are publically available outside NOAA or freely accessible within NOAA shall not provide location information for UCH or survey areas. In certain circumstances the lead archaeologist for the cruise may request that certain UCH sites

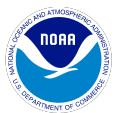


are not mentioned in the public reports.

4. UCH mapping follow-up for National Marine Sanctuaries

- a.** When the EX conducts UCH work inside a National Marine Sanctuary the EX Cruise Coordinator shall inform the OER Marine Archaeologist, ONMS Maritime Heritage Program Director, Sanctuary Superintendent and Sanctuary Maritime Heritage Coordinator on the availability of data products and initial results of the survey. ONMS shall determine the sensitivity of the data and whether or not it can be disclosed to the public. Published metadata shall indicate the point of contact to access UCH data within the NMS system is the Director of the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries.

D. Data Archiving – See Appendix C



Appendix B: TELEPRESENCE-ENABLED ROV OPERATIONS

The following outlines the process for pre-cruise planning, field operations, post-cruise follow up, and data archival procedures for the following scenarios:

- When a cruise conducts ROV operations specifically targeted at UCH.
- When UCH is unexpectedly discovered on non-archaeological operation

A. *Unexpected UCH Discovery*

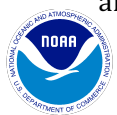
- During the Cruise: If UCH is unexpectedly discovered during an ROV dive, the onboard Expedition Coordinator should immediately contact OER's Lead Maritime Archaeologist, and the Archaeology Doctors-on-Call identified for that expedition. Those archaeologists should be engaged in the site investigation as soon as possible to provide information to help assess the site discovered. No changes to the data, video or onboard data acquisition processes should be made. A post-dive and post-cruise discussion will be held with the OER archaeologist to determine whether any datasets should be withheld from archive. (Section 2.D.II).
- **Follow-up when UCH is unexpectedly discovered**
 - a. The EX Cruise Coordinator and the OER Marine Archaeologist will have an initial consultation to discuss the nature of the UCH and its potential significance. This consultation may include other agencies or entities.
 - b. If UCH is determined not to be historically significant no change to standard data management procedures is required.
 - c. If UCH has the potential for historical significance but it is determined that no harm will result by disclosing position information, such as UCH in deep water, no change to standard data management procedures is required.
 - d. If UCH is or has potential historical significance and disclosing location information about the site poses a threat, further discussions will be held on how to minimize potential harmful impacts, including data management decisions outlined in the Data Archiving section of this document. The EX cruise Coordinator, a representative from the data management team, OER's marine archaeologist, a representative from the ONMS Maritime Heritage Program, and any parties with jurisdiction, management or other legal ties to the resource shall meet to determine what measures are needed to protect the UCH while minimizing impacts on the distribution of data and data products.

B. *Cruises conducted with ROV operations specifically targeted at UCH.*

1. Pre-Cruise Planning: ROV Exploration

a. Notifying the Team of their Responsibility to Protect Sensitive UCH Resources

Expedition members and OER personnel to have a legal responsibility to protect sensitive archaeological information (primarily location information) from untimely release.



For a planned UCH cruise, the EC shall notify the CO and each shall have responsibility for ensuring personnel are aware of this responsibility. The EC shall provide an archaeology background document to familiarize personnel with the particular mission and requirements.

Appendix D details the range of existing accountability mechanisms already in place.

2. Pre-dive planning

- a.** Archaeologists will develop a dive plan based on the best available knowledge of the site that will maximize data recovery and minimize any potential impact to the site. The archaeology team will work closely with the cruise coordinator and deep submergence vehicle manager to develop and implement the plan. The plan should include:
 - I.** Objectives (cultural/interdisciplinary science)
 - II.** The types of sensors needed and data to be generated
- b.** As a rule ROV dives will not disturb or touch the shipwreck or cultural feature. Exceptions to this rule must discuss the rationale behind such a decision and incorporate it into the dive plan (collection of diagnostic artifacts or samples is sometimes conducted if the activity leads to better baseline characterization).
- c.** Prior to the cruise any permitting requirements should be identified and if required, permits must be procured.
- d.** Automated Information System (AIS): NOAA requires that the AIS feed which broadcasts information about the ship, including position, course and speed, must remain on at all times for collision avoidance and other safety reasons. Although the [International Maritime Organization](#)'s (IMO) Maritime Safety Committee condemns the Internet publication of AIS data, it is easily available for viewing. During the cruise planning phase the Expedition Coordinator will provide the AIS broadcast range on the EX to the chief scientist and science team. The science team, chief scientist, or other parties involved in a UCH mapping cruise should be made aware of this and decide whether the value of the operation merits acceptance of the potential issues/outcomes imposed. A Go/No-Go decision will be made based on this information.

C. Field Operations

- 1.** Exploration dives by ROV should be planned to collect optical and acoustic images without causing physical disturbance to the UCH. Representatives and leads from operational groups including the ROV, data/video, and telepresence teams, and ship operations should meet to discuss ROV operations and data collection.
 - a.** The guidelines for mapping operations should be followed to ensure site locations are not disclosed during field operations. SOPs with full operational details are available on the ship.
 - b.** A three-mile buffer zone shall be created around the UCH target or isolated survey box. The time at which the ship enters, and departs the three-mile buffer



- zone needs to be recorded and provided to the Data Team Lead for post-processing use. Following work at the site, the ship will return to the site where it first entered the three-mile buffer zone to continue operations.
- c.** The following steps will be taken just prior to entering the five-mile buffer zone in order to stop broadcasting the ship's location while the survey is conducted:
- I.** NOAA email events will be stopped (OMAO/ET)
 - NOAA Shiptracker: Disable/stop the e-mail updates from the ship going to OMAO / Shiptracker
 - *Okeanos* Atlas: Disable/stop the e-mail updates to NCDDC
 - SAMOS: Disable/stop the e-mail update to FSU containing METOC and flow-through data, etc.
 - II.** Telepresence Video Feeds (OER Telepresence team lead): Do not stream any feeds that include the ship's location, including but not limited to the SCS data screen, or any active mapping data acquisition screens, or video feeds. It is acceptable to stream video feeds that do not include the ship's location.
 - III.** Redirect Live Feed as needed (OER EC or CO): If highly sensitive features (human remains, evidence of human remain such as shoes or other accoutrements, highly valuable items, etc.) are going to be investigated or are unexpectedly encountered during the course of our seafloor investigation, the lead archaeologist, ROV Team Leader, Expedition Coordinator or Commanding Officer has authority to immediately switch the live feed from the ROV and Seirios camera sled to another camera on the ship.
- d.** Daily updates on the *Okeanos* Atlas are normally linked to the location of the ship at the time the update is posted. If daily updates are made during UCH surveys, no position shall be provided. If a position is required, the position should be posted as it makes sense, 3 miles outside of the extent of the site or survey area.
- e.** Normal transmissions from the ship shall resume after the EX finishes UCH survey operations and exits the 3-mile buffer zone. The point of exit should be as near to the point of entry as is feasible to minimize location data gaps pointing to the location of the UCH.
- f.** No informal information about UCH should be released to the general public by the ship or personnel. This includes posting information and images on social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter or personal blogs. Images, video and information on UCH will be released to the public following the normal process and announcement of discoveries will be made through the appropriate offices and public affairs officials.
- g.** In addition to the items listed, the ship sends out automated weather (autoIMET) observations every hour and manual weather observations every 6 hours with positions as a voluntary ship observer. These observations are pulled onto public sites by several different websites and Google Map apps. One example is sailwx.info. This is only accurate to the nearest decimal degree (6 nm). This level



of accuracy is not of concern.

D. Post-Cruise Data Management – Appendix C for detail

Following completion of the expedition, the Expedition Coordinator should have a follow-up call with the Data Management Team & OER lead archaeologist to review the datasets collected, confirm those that need to be withheld from public archive, and provide information to the data management team for associated metadata records.

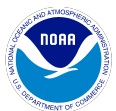
E. Post-Cruise Follow-Up

1. Information Release

- a.** No informal information about UCH should be released to the general public by the ship or personnel. This includes posting information and images on social networking sites like Facebook or personal blogs. Images, video, and mapping data will be released to the public following the normal process and announcement of discoveries will be made through the appropriate offices and public affairs officials.
- b.** Determination of whether UCH is potentially eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, or eligible for protection under other legislation such as the Sunken Military Craft Act or National Marine Sanctuary Act, will take some time following completion of the cruise. Sensitive or potentially sensitive information about the UCH is to remain restricted until determination is complete. Following completion of the cruise, the lead Archaeologist will work with others to analyze the UCH data and conduct historical research to determine whether the UCH is eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.
 - I.** If the UCH is determined to be eligible, the lead Archaeologist will prepare the nomination for the NRHP process.
 - II.** If the UCH is determined to NOT be eligible, and protection of the site does not fall under other legislation, the Lead archaeologist will notify the data management team that site information can be made publicly available.

2. UCH Targeted Cruise Follow-Up

- a.** The EX cruise coordinator, OER's marine archaeologist, a representative from the ONMS Maritime Heritage Program, archaeologists involved in the survey, and any parties with jurisdiction, management or other legal ties to the resource shall meet to discuss the potential historical significance of the UCH and the sensitivities of releasing data to the public that can be protected under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act. The outcome of this meeting will determine if it is necessary to protect site location information from public release.
 - I.** When location data can be released:
 - a.** If the findings determine that releasing information and data on UCH is not a threat, development of products and data management should



follow the guidelines for a standard ROV cruise.

- II.** When location data should be protected:
 - a.** If it is determined that a site is or has potential to be historically significant and eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, the location and data containing the location should not be released to the public.
- III.** Data products that contain position information will be forwarded to the EX data management team where data and products will be stored in an archive with restricted access.
- IV.** Cruise plans, cruise reports, situation reports, mapping summary reports and other documents that are publically available outside NOAA or freely accessible within NOAA shall not provide location information for UCH or survey areas. In certain circumstances the lead archaeologist for the cruise may request that certain UCH sites are not mentioned in the public reports.

Appendix C: Post-Cruise Data Management

Data collected by OER that is considered sensitive will be protected from direct public release until such time as a final determination can be made as to permanent protection.

Data in this state will be:

- Fully documented, so as to be independently understandable to users;
- Visible through publication of metadata records by OER;
- Accessible upon request to OER (controlled access by permission);
- Preserved in NOAA archives as 'restricted' (not available for direct public access).

These data will not be available for direct public access unless and until they are eliminated from consideration for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (NHPA Section 304), or for protection under other legislation such as the Sunken Military Craft Act or National Marine Sanctuary Act.

If data are nominated and accepted for any official protection, then the exceptional status will be made permanent, and all documentation updated and finalized as such.

Data generated by the *Okeanos Explorer* is archived under a data management agreement with NCEI. Only data that has potential to reveal the nature and location of UCH shall be restricted from public access. In accordance with the data management agreement, sensitive data from the EX will have restricted access at NCEI. To assist researchers in discovering sensitive data NGDC will publish a metadata record (but not the data) that identifies a point of contact for access. Requests to access the data will be made to the Director of OER who may delegate to the OER marine archaeologist. In lieu of the OER marine archaeologist, the OER Director may delegate to the Director of the ONMS Maritime Heritage Program.

If data is found to be sensitive because it reveals the location of a historically significant cultural resource, Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act provides that the head of a Federal agency or other public official shall withhold from public disclosure information about the location, character, or ownership of a historic property when disclosure may cause a significant invasion of privacy; risk harm to the historic property; or impede the use of a traditional religious site by



practitioners. Data collected by the EX that is considered sensitive will be archived in a location where it can be withheld from public disclosure.

Data sets and associated products are housed in the appropriate NOAA archive; National Oceanographic Data Center, National Geophysical Data Center, National Coastal Data Development Center, National Climate Data Center, and the NOAA Central Library.

- Digital Atlas: NCEI will develop appropriate metadata records to post on the digital atlas.
- CTD and XBT data collected during mapping operations conducted within the buffer zone will not be repressed from the *Okeanos Atlas* and will be held in a public archive.
- Cruise reports, cruise plans, mapping summary reports and other documents that are publically available outside NOAA or freely accessible within NOAA should not provide location information for UCH or survey areas.

Start and end times for the 3-mile buffer zone surrounding a UCH site need to be provided to the data management team. Datasets containing sensitive location information will be restricted in their entirety, unless other parsing arrangements have been made. The following datasets may contain sensitive UCH location information and need to be reviewed, post-processed as appropriate, made restricted and pertinent metadata records created and made available.

- Multibeam, sub-bottom and single beam sonar data
- SCS Data Logs are to be restricted
- All ROV dive products (including associated sensor data) need to be restricted
- CTD rosette and *in situ* sensor datasets collected in relation to the UCH, and within the 3 nm buffer zone, need to be restricted.
- All imagery needs to be reviewed and geospatial imagery removed before being made public. Imagery with geospatial information should be restricted.
- Ship track and other datasets within the buffer zone

Appendix D: NDA References

Expedition members and OER personnel to have a legal responsibility to protect sensitive archaeological information (primarily location information) from untimely release. The following summarizes the types of personnel who might be engaged in an *Okeanos Explorer* Expedition, where their responsibility to protect sensitive location information about UCH lies, and whether this responsibility has already been addressed or signature of a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) is required to allow their participation in an expedition with planned UCH operations.

- If they are federally-employed scientists, they agreed not to disclose sensitive information and to adhere to federal laws as part of the terms of their employment with the federal government.
- The crew onboard the ship are under the CO's purview. On *Okeanos Explorer*, all crew are federal employees, and thus agreed not to disclose sensitive information and to adhere to federal laws as part of the terms of their employment with the federal government.
- All other members of the Mission team who are not federal employees and are engaged at-sea or ashore (including technicians, vehicle operators, students, etc.) are required to sign a non-disclosure agreement to protect sensitive cultural heritage information as part of their contract agreement.
- Other OER personnel who have access to data and information on the FTP site are either federal employees or contractors and need to be similarly reminded of their



responsibilities. OER contractors signed an NDA as condition of employment with the federal government (this should be confirmed annually).

At the beginning of the expedition, all personnel need to be notified of their responsibilities:

MISSION PERSONNEL (Notified by: Expedition Coordinator)		
Employee	Accountability Mechanism for With-holding Sensitive Data	Action
NOAA Federal Employees	NOAA and Federal Contract	Reminder of contract, and provide archaeology background document.
Mission Contractors (UCAR, ERT Inc., 2020 Company LLC)	Non-Disclosure Agreement	Confirm all contractors signed NDA. Send reminder of contract and provide archaeology background document.
NOAA/Federal Scientists	NOAA and Federal Contract	Reminder of Contract, and provide Archaeology background document
Other Federal Scientists (BOEM, Navy, NPS, etc.)	Federal Contract	Reminder of Contract, and provide Archaeology background document
Other Mission Personnel and Scientists	Non-Disclosure Agreement	Get NDA Signed
Okeanos Explorer Crew (Notified by: CO or Desingnee)		
NOAA Federal Employees	Subject to NOAA and the ship's communications plans and protocols for sensitive data	CO sends out reminder of contract to ship via All Hands, and provides Archaeology background document
Other Federal Employees (e.g. Public Health Service)	Subject to NOAA and the ship's communications plans and protocols for sensitive data	CO sends out reminder of contract to ship via All Hands, and provides Archaeology background document
Wage Mariners	Subject to NOAA and the ship's communications plans and protocols for sensitive data	CO sends out reminder of contract to ship via All Hands, and provides Archaeology background document

