

Dear Fellow Explorers,

Returning from a month of exploring the territorial waters of American Samoa aboard E/V *Nautilus* ([NA164](#) and [NA165](#)) has reminded me of the tremendous value in exploration that extends well beyond the data collected. Led by OET, engagement with the people of American Samoa and the National Marine Sanctuary of American Samoa through ship tours, participation in the voyage, visits to schools, and the livestream of exploration has invigorated the American Samoan community to learn more about their deep ocean waters, its mysteries, its connection to their lives, and its beauty and power. Likewise, it has helped me gain a deeper appreciation of American Samoan culture and their desire for ocean exploration. As we continue to explore in the central and western Pacific, the co-development of exploration activities with the local communities will remain a hallmark of OEI activities.

As summer turns to fall, OEI remains very busy in our efforts to explore, develop technology, and engage with the community. Upcoming E/V *Nautilus* exploration of the nation of Palau's ocean territories will span the upcoming months. On its way west, E/V *Nautilus* will map across six different Pacific Island nation's territorial waters. These exploration activities underscore the fact that ocean exploration is a global need and that OEI and NOAA Ocean Exploration are happy to work with other nations to fill gaps that they otherwise might not be able to fill. In addition, the UNH-led 'DoubleDriX' campaign in the Gulf of Maine begins in less than a week! This operation, led by UNH-CCOM, will use two *DriX* USVs in tandem to explore a region where exploration data is critical to future decisions of ocean use and conservation. The *DriX* vehicles will be operated from a shoreside, remote operations center in Provincetown, MA. This method of remote operations will have a significant role in future ocean exploration and will be the focus of the upcoming National Ocean Exploration Forum, organized by OEI, that will be held on October 16-17 in Boston, MA. The forum will bring together a small group of federal, academic, philanthropic, and industry leaders in remote operations to chart a course for future technological development that can bring this emerging approach to ocean exploration.

As new ocean exploration technologies emerge, remote operations will need to play a central role in their development. This is exemplified by the recently announced funding for the development of two new remotely operated vehicles ([WHOI press release](#)). These mROVs (medium work-class ROVs) will fill a gap in ROV capacity for the science and exploration community that can work on smaller research vessels by taking advantage of remote operation approaches. The National Science Foundation is supporting one of the vehicles, while NOAA, through OEI, is supporting the development of another mROV specifically for restoration activities in the Gulf of Mexico with the NOAA Mesophotic and Deep Benthic Communities restoration project. The development and build will be led by WHOI with support from USM and URI who will collaborate on vehicle operations and management.

**Deepest Regards,
Adam**

NOAA Ocean Exploration Cooperative Institute Renewed for 5 More Years!



The OEI has been renewed for five more years! “The renewal of the OEI is a great reflection of the tremendous experience, creativity, and productivity of each of the affiliated institutions, but even more, it speaks to the tremendous benefit of having all of these institutions working cooperatively to help NOAA achieve its mission,” said OEI Executive Director Dr. Adam Soule.

Read more about the OEI renewal [here](#).

Beyond the Blue Strategic Planning for Pacific Islands

The Interagency Working Group on Ocean Exploration and Characterization ([IWG-OEC](#)) is soliciting public input through a [Federal Register Notice](#) on Strategic Priorities for Ocean Exploration and Characterization in the Pacific Islands within the United States Exclusive Economic Zone and Outer Continental Shelf (Pacific Islands Priorities Report). Public input in response to this notice will inform future prioritization efforts in the Pacific Islands region, which will build on IWG-OEC’s previous national [Strategic Priorities report](#) that was published in October 2022. The FRN will remain open until November 4th.

The IWG-OEC sees value in re-initiating the ad hoc thematic federal working groups and seeking public comments to further refine thematic priorities and data needs specific to the Pacific Islands (State of Hawai'i and the U.S. Pacific Territories and Possessions) within the U.S. EEZ and Outer Continental Shelf since there have been changes to relevant federal statutes and an expansion of federal interests. Additionally, a new federally led regional campaign, “Beyond the Blue: Illuminating the Pacific,” was recently launched. Beyond the Blue (BtB) is a multifaceted ocean exploration campaign designed to raise collective knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of U.S. and international waters in the Pacific Islands region through coordinated mapping and exploration expeditions, data management and sharing, strategic partnerships, and outreach and engagement. With field efforts anticipated in 2024-2030, the Beyond the Blue campaign will provide a framework for coordination and communication amongst partners to improve understanding of the Pacific Islands region, bringing together resources and expertise to accomplish more together than could be done independently.

If you have any questions about Beyond the Blue or the FRN, do not hesitate to reach out to Gretchen Spencer, BtB Executive Secretary, (gretchen.spencer@noaa.gov) and/or the NOMECEC Exec Sec Team (nomec.staff@noaa.gov).

Congratulations, Megan and Dana!



MEGAN COOK, MEM



Dana Yoerger
IEEE Fellow

The OECI would like to congratulate Megan Cook (OET) and Dr. Dana Yoerger (WHOI) on awards received at the 2024 Oceans Conference and Exposition in Halifax, Nova Scotia last week!

Megan was awarded the Ocean News & Technology Early Career Ocean Professional Award! The award is presented to an individual within 10 years of their last degree or designation, who has shown leadership in Marine Technology Society (MTS), and who works in a professional capacity in management, engineering or research and development in a marine technology field. Read more about MTS and Megan's accomplishments [here](#).

Dana received the Oceanic Engineering Society (OES) Distinguished Technical Achievement Award for his monumental contributions to the field of ocean engineering. Read more about Dana's achievements and IEEE OES [here](#).

2025 E/V *Nautilus* Call for Science Input

In 2025, E/V*Nautilus* will conduct several multidisciplinary expeditions to explore the deep sea throughout the Western Pacific with funding from NOAA Ocean Exploration via the OECI, expeditions will target priority areas in Guam, the Mariana Islands, the Marshall Islands, the Solomon Islands, and Fiji. We invite members of the science and resource management community, particularly from the geographies where expeditions will take place, to [submit science priorities](#) for these expeditions, including specific requests for seafloor mapping, remotely operated vehicle dives, physical samples, and technology integrations. Please provide your input by January 15, 2025. Information received will be used to develop expedition plans and opportunities for collaboration, which will be discussed during planning webinars preceding expeditions.

The Ocean Exploration Trust plans to continue operating E/V*Nautilus* in the Western and Central Pacific for the next several years in partnership with NOAA Ocean Exploration, the Ocean Exploration Cooperative Institute, and other partners. NOAA Ocean Exploration plans to conduct additional expeditions in this region using NOAA Ship *Okeanos Explorer* as part of *Beyond the Blue: Illuminating the Pacific*, a collaborative campaign to explore the Pacific Islands Region. Priorities submitted through this call may therefore be shared with NOAA Ocean Exploration for coordinated expedition planning.

Please help us share this call with your networks to ensure broad representation, and stay tuned to future communications from the Ocean Exploration Trust and NOAA Ocean Exploration for additional opportunities to provide input.

OECI Focused NOAA Ocean Exploration Science Seminar Series

This year, URI's Inner Space Center has been producing another seminar series hosted by NOAA Ocean Exploration! Each of the science seminars are available to watch live on the ISC's YouTube page. If you cannot join us live, the recorded broadcast can be accessed on YouTube as well. Please join the last seminar (and rewatch those you may have missed)!

[Seminar 1: Preparing for the Ocean Data Revolution](#)

[Seminar 2: Midwater Exploration through Multi-Vehicle Operations](#)

[Seminar 3: Education and Outreach](#)

Seminar 4: Operational Exploration – Wednesday, October 30th at 2 pm ET

Announcements, Events, and Opportunities

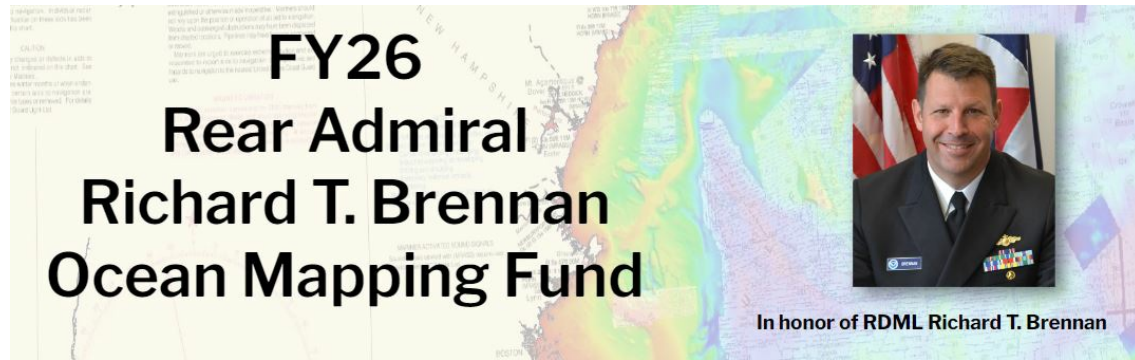
RobotX Competition Looking for Volunteer Judges

OECI has been invited to participate in the RoboNation network of robotic competitions as volunteer judges. There are many competitions and opportunities to participate, with the next one coming up this November in Sarasota, Florida. The 2024 Maritime RobotX Challenge is an autonomous robotic competition where 20 undergraduate teams from around the world will compete in Sarasota, Florida November 3rd-9th. (There are also opportunities to pre-judge design documentation and presentations if you are unable to travel).

For more information, please visit <https://robotx.org/judge-invite>



Background: The Maritime RobotX Challenge is an international, university-level competition designed to foster student interest in autonomous robotic systems operating in the maritime domain, with an emphasis on the science and engineering of cooperative autonomy. This competition facilitates the building of international relationships between students, academic



The FY26 Brennan Matching Fund opportunity is now open and invites non-Federal entities to partner with the ocean and coastal mapping programs of NOAA's National Ocean Service on jointly-funded projects of mutual interest, and establishes selection criteria and submission requirements for such projects under the NOAA Rear Admiral Richard T. Brennan Ocean Mapping Fund program.

September 13, 2024: Virtual office hours between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. by emailing iwgocm.staff@noaa.gov.

October 11, 2024 by 5 p.m. Eastern Time (ET): All application materials due to iwgocm.staff@noaa.gov.

Funding Solicitation

The National Offshore Wind Research & Development Consortium intends to run a competitive solicitation titled "Solicitation 4.0 – Innovations in Floating Offshore Wind," with a funding pool of \$10.6 million.

Proposal submissions due - November 14, 2024 by 3pm PDT

Find more information here:

<https://nationaloffshorewind.org/solicitations/>

Hydrographic Services Review Panel

The solicitation period for new Hydrographic Services Review Panel members is now open!

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/06/03/2024-12106/hydrographic-services-review-panel>

2025 is a "bye" year, so the closing date for this solicitation is February 21, 2025 with new members, if selected, starting their four year term on January 1, 2026.

Please see the linked Federal Register Notice above for more information and please share broadly! We are looking for an array of experts in the disciplines related to hydrographic data and services, marine transportation, port administration, vessel pilotage, coastal and fishery management, and others from all regions of the country.



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