

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20050

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned organizations strong support your initiative for Ocean Mapping of the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and the Shoreline and Nearshore of Alaska. We commend your leadership to help to advance maritime commerce, domestic seafood production, healthy and sustainable fisheries, coastal resilience, energy production, tourism and recreation, environmental protection, national and homeland security, and other U.S. interests.

As your administration coordinates a national strategy to map the EEZ, we respectfully urge the full utilization of the private sector to carry out the necessary ocean and shoreline surveying and mapping.

We are concerned this important national security and economic security program will not be completed in a timely and efficient manner if assigned to the in-house personnel and assets of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Unfortunately, NOAA has a troubling and undistinguished track record in its hydrographic surveying and ocean mapping program. There is a long history of recommendations and directives from Congress, the Commerce Department Inspector General, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences, and others that NOAA privatize or contract out its mapping-related activities. These reports have found waste and inefficiency in the NOAA in-house program.

We support a strategy with a strong and leading role for private sector geospatial firms for the required surveying, mapping and geospatial activities rather than tasking NOAA with any field work, data acquisition, applications of data, or any other commercially-available surveying and mapping responsibilities. Such a program will more efficiently apply taxpayer money, create private sector jobs, and enhance the timely and accurate completion of this important task.

Respectfully,