

Florida Oceans and Coastal Resources Council
11/17/05

***Talking Points: Concept Paper on Florida Ports and Coastal Ocean
Observing System (FL-PCOOS).***

Presented by the Florida Coastal and Ocean Observing System Caucus

- USCOP Report & US Ocean Action Plan identify ocean observing as one of the highest priorities for increased attention and investment with regard to national ocean policy and research priorities. Ocean observing will play a critical role as we move both toward an ecosystem-based approach to management and strive to better incorporate science into management decisions.
- Improved ocean observations are needed to enhance the safety of marine operations – both commercial and recreational, to improve our ability to forecast hurricane tracks and intensity as well as storm surge and harmful algal blooms, and to provide the information needed to better manage our resources, such as coral reefs and fisheries, based on science and within an ecosystem-based approach.
- There is no State that would better benefit from improved ocean observing than Florida! A region whose economy is so heavily dependent on its ocean and coasts.
- As part of the nation's integrated ocean observing system, institutions across Florida have begun developing and implementing ocean observing, modeling, and forecasting abilities. It is critical now, that we move ahead, by bringing these parties together, investing in a statewide, coordinated effort (which fits into the broader national effort), that brings in the user and stakeholder communities and begins to build a system that is most advantageous to the State and its needs.
- With this in mind numerous parties have come together through the FL Coastal and Ocean Observing System Caucus and developed a plan. The plan builds on existing capabilities and uses the Tampa real-time environmental information support system (PORTS, Physical Oceanography Real-Time System) as a foundation.
- The Tampa PORTS system has been in operation for some 15 years and provides important observations with easy access for shipping, recreational boaters, oil spill response, fishing, etc.
- Ideally, Florida's entire coastal zone should be outfitted with observing instrumentation, but obviously this is both cost prohibitive and simply unrealistic. So the idea is to begin constructing an observing system for Florida in stages, focusing first on the areas where observations are most needed and will be most

useful. And to sustain and integrate existing systems.

- To further on the PORTS concept, the idea is to begin outfitting Florida's busiest ports first and any other areas designated as high priority where observations may significantly help resource or hazard management.
- Sustaining and integrating existing and developing systems are both a high priority and challenge. However, a big step has already been taken, bringing together the various entities within the State working on ocean observing, the development of a plan (that is still evolving), and the recognition that it will be critical to bring in the user communities and stakeholders in this development phase.
- It will take significant investment, but with a plan in place that focuses on management and user community needs, a powerful case can be made for support to the State and the Federal agencies. As a side note, Florida needs to be ready if and when additional Federal monies for ocean observing become available.
- A few last points:
 - Development on a statewide basis for statewide needs
 - Based on the Tampa PORTS model with proven success
 - An opportunity right now to bring together the research community, managers, and stakeholders and work towards the information needs for better management, understanding, resource use, and safer operations.
 - Also, help Florida move toward an ecosystem-based approach toward management.
- We hope the Council will consider the prospectus as an evolving approach and will put ocean observing and its integration into management as a high priority in its research plan and as a project that deserves funding as soon as possible and over the long term.

Thank you.

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Tampa PORTS

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