

NOAA Observing Systems Council

Terms of Reference

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A. Governance and Purpose

1. The NOAA Observing Systems Council (NOSC) is one of NOAA's Strategy Councils, which provide analyses and recommendations related to the NOAA functions that require cross Line Office leadership and guidance. The Councils are advisory bodies that support NOAA's decision makers, including the NOAA Administrator, in managing and overseeing strategic agency priorities. The Chairs of the Strategy Councils are appointed by the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere (NOAA Administrator) and report directly to the NOAA Executive Council (NEC).
2. Additionally, in accordance with NOAA Administrative Order (NAO) 216-111, the NOAA Strategy Councils must:
 - a. Use corporate strategy as the primary means to frame and focus their proceedings.
 - b. Assess the impact of strategic prioritization and budget formulation proposals to their strategic portfolio.
 - c. Advise the NOAA Executive Panel (NEP) and the NEC, as appropriate, throughout the planning, budgeting, decision making, and oversight process.
3. The NOSC is the principal advisory body to the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere (NOAA Administrator) in matters regarding NOAA's integrated observing systems portfolio and data management activities (end-to-end collection, processing, storage, archiving, accessing, and disseminating of environmental data, information, and products). It also serves as NOAA's principal coordinating body to the United States Group on Earth Observations (USGEO), a Subcommittee under the White House National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) Committee on the Environment. NOSC responsibilities and activities are defined in NAO 212-16. Specific tasks include:
 - a. Coordinating Earth and Space observing and environmental data management activities across NOAA, including with other NOAA Councils.
 - b. Providing policies and guidance in the development of NOAA's integrated observing systems portfolio and data management system.
 - c. Providing recommendations to the NOAA Executive Council (NEC) on Earth and Space observation and environmental data management system requirements, architectures, emerging technologies, and investments.

B. Membership

1. Chair: Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction (ASEOP)
2. Vice-Chairs:
 - a. Assistant Administrator for Satellite and Information Services or designee
 - b. Assistant Administrator for Weather Services or designee
 - c. Director, NOAA Office of Marine and Aviation Operations or designee
3. Principals: Appointed by the Line Office (LO) Assistant Administrators and Directors. Representatives include:
 - a. Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
 - b. Chief Data Officer (CDO)
 - c. National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS)
 - d. National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)
 - e. National Ocean Service (NOS)
 - f. National Weather Service (NWS)
 - g. Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR)
 - h. Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO)
4. Non-Voting Members:
 - a. Observing Systems Committee (OSC) Co-Chairs or designees
 - b. Data Governance Committee (DGC) Deputy Chair or designee
 - c. NOAA Representative to USGEO
 - d. Office of Space Commerce
 - e. Interagency Meteorological Coordination Office (IMCO)
5. Advisor: Technology, Planning and Integration for Observation (TPIO) Representative

TPIO is a technical team within the Systems Architecture and Engineering (SAE) division of NESDIS that provides corporate analytical capabilities to support the NOSC and ASEOP in the oversight of observing systems portfolio management.

6. Executive Secretariat: Staffed by a member of the TPIO team.

C. Committees/Teams/Working Groups

1. The Council may form committees, teams, or working groups to achieve specific tasks. Such subgroups may include persons who are not members of the Council, but the Council shall include a Council member on all subgroups. The NOSC may designate either standing or ad hoc committees. Committees in turn may establish supplemental teams or working groups. The two standing committees are the Data Governance Committee (DGC) and the Observing Systems Committee (OSC).
2. Committees will use the same decision-making process followed by the Council. The Council may terminate any subgroup at its discretion.

D. Roles and Responsibilities

1. Council
 - a. Maintain cognizance over NOAA Earth and Space observation and environmental data management systems activities while coordinating NOAA participation in national and international Earth and Space observation efforts (e.g. USGEO).
 - b. Provide oversight and guidance as appropriate to facilitate development of NOAA's Earth and Space observation and environmental data management systems investment strategy that supports the high-level strategic guidance issued by the Department of Commerce, NOAA, and relevant LOs and Staff Offices, as well as the principles articulated in NAO 212-16.
 - c. Review Earth and Space observation and environmental data management systems requirements and endorse processes used to validate those requirements.
 - d. Assess Earth and Space observation and environmental data management system architecture alternatives based on analyses and recommendations provided by TPIO, LOs, and other subgroups as appropriate. Working with LOs, the NOSC identifies:
 1. Best practices and procedures for portfolio management of NOAA's observing systems,
 2. NOAA user observation requirements,
 3. NOAA observing system and data management capabilities,

4. Gaps between user observation requirements and capabilities, and
 5. Observing system and data management solutions to fulfill NOAA user observation requirements
- e. Develop recommended prioritization of Earth and Space observation and environmental data management systems investments.
 - f. Conduct an assessment of the health, performance, and risk factors of selected observing systems to inform the NOSC of potential impacts on NOAA mission requirements at least biennially or at the direction of the NOSC Chair and OSC Co-Chairs.
 - g. Identify emerging Earth and Space observing technologies, promote broader awareness and connectivity of emerging technologies research and development activities across NOAA, and develop recommendations to help NOAA infuse new technology into the observing system portfolio. Collaborate with the Science and Ocean and Coastal Councils in these efforts, as appropriate.
 - h. Recommend acquisition of appropriate Earth and Space observation and environmental data management systems to meet NOAA requirements.
 - i. Lead or provide input for responses to information requests, audits, and studies about the observing systems portfolio, and NOAA's data holding, particularly those with an impact across all of NOAA, or multiple LOs.
 - j. Coordinate, as appropriate, with the other Strategy Councils, the Earth Systems Integration Board (ESIB), and internal NOAA councils and ad hoc groups engaged in observing systems and data management activities.
 - k. Coordinate, as appropriate, with NOAA partners with respect to data collection, access, and utilization.
2. Chair and Vice Chairs
 - a. Direct Council activities.
 - b. Preside over Council meetings.
3. Members
 - a. Attend all Council meetings, or delegate decision making authority to an alternate attendee for NOSC deliberations and decisions.
 - b. Identify LO points of contact for interaction with the Executive Secretariat, as needed.
 - c. Accomplish taskings as directed by NOSC Chair and Vice Chairs.

E. Meeting Frequency

Meetings are held monthly, usually on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Special sessions may be convened at the direction and discretion of the Chair.

F. Decision Making Process

Decisions will be reached by informed consensus. The Chair makes the final decision when consensus is not achieved.