

4-I. Are there any issues in interacting with NOAA that require attention?

The elimination of the Environmental Research Laboratories as an entity within the OAR structure has caused problems in the conduct of day-to-day business. This has been recognized and steps begun and/or proposed to address the issues. An example of past problems was the lack of communication of legal concerns about funding instruments (including but not limited to the NWS in-lieu-of-rent issue) at the close of FY 2002. The Director was apprised of the issue only on September 22, 2002, was never party to the conversations, and expected to accept the consequences. Similar communication breakdowns occurred in the last round of cooperative agreement proposals. OAR has moved to rectify this situation and the current NOAA Research Review has identified similar concerns.

A casualty of the current structure is the absence of regular interactions of NOAA and its University partners at the campus level. The JIMAR Administrative Board last met in the Spring of 2001. Prior to that, a meeting occurred in 1998. At least one other Joint Institute (JI) Administrative Board went five years between meetings. These interactions serve the JIs especially well. It is unlikely that a return to the “Good Old Days” of annual meetings will happen, but some serious consideration needs to be given to this matter. Note: The UH-NOAA Memorandum of Understanding specifies annual meetings.

JIMAR is over 2,600 miles in a great circle from its host laboratory. Interactions among JIMAR and PMEL scientists are accordingly less frequent. Many Joint Institutes are in close proximity to their host laboratories, and interactions may require crossing the street (Miami) or driving across town (Norman). JIMAR can support its scientists’ visits to PMEL and other NOAA laboratories but is precluded from supporting corresponding return visits. This is well understood as a consequence of the

federal source of our funds. Recently, Commerce legal council have determined that the stricture against use of federal funds to support travel to a university hosting a Joint Institute applies to funds from all sources. In addition to choking the interchange between JIMAR and NOAA laboratories, this determination restricts an entire university.

In the discussion of finances it was pointed out that Joint Institute base funds have stagnated on time scales of decades. The post-doctoral programs which were hallmarks of the Joint Institutes have nearly disappeared. The base fund problem is common to the OAR laboratories as well. There has been a continuous engagement of JI Directors and OAR Administration on this matter. Progress has been made in small steps, but the current federal budget proposals suggest a difficult road ahead.