



DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Request for Comment on Satellite-Derived Bathymetry Addition to Standard Ocean Mapping Protocol

AGENCY: National Ocean Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce.

ACTION: Notice of request for public comment.

SUMMARY: The National Ocean Mapping, Exploration, and Characterization (NOMECE) Council and the Interagency Working Group on Ocean and Coastal Mapping (IWG-OCM) request input from all interested parties on the draft addendums to the Standard Ocean Mapping Protocol (SOMP). The SOMP was developed in accordance with Objective 2.1 of the National Strategy for Ocean Mapping, Exploring, and Characterizing the United States Exclusive Economic Zone (NOMECE Strategy), which directed the IWG-OCM to establish a SOMP to encourage consistency in data acquisition, stewardship, and management across a subset of ocean sensing capabilities for seafloor mapping. The first version of the SOMP was released in April 2024 and includes sections on bathymetry, seabed backscatter, water column backscatter, side scan sonar imagery, sub-bottom profiling, and magnetometer data readings. The draft addendums to the Bathymetry and Data Management chapters are focused on Satellite-Derived Bathymetry (SDB).

DATES: All comments on this Federal Register Notice must be received by 5 p.m. ET on **[INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]**.

ADDRESSES: Written comments on the draft addendums must be submitted via email to iwgocm.staff@noaa.gov. Please include “Public Comment on SOMP SDB

Addendums” in the subject line of the email message. If applicable, clearly indicate the section and page number to which submitted comments pertain. The written comments NOAA receives are considered part of the public record, and the entirety of the comment, including the name of the commenter, email address, attachments, and other supporting materials, will be publicly accessible. Sensitive personally identifiable information, such as account numbers and Social Security numbers, should not be included with the comment. Comments that contain profanity, vulgarity, threats, or other inappropriate language will not be considered. All submissions must be in English. Email attachments will be accepted in plain text, Microsoft Word, or Adobe PDF formats only. Each individual or institution is requested to submit only one comment. Commenting on this FRN is voluntary. Please note that the U.S. Government will not pay for comment preparation, or for the use of any information contained in the comment.

Documents are available at the following locations:

- The draft SDB-addendum to the Bathymetry chapter of the April 2024 SOMP may be downloaded or viewed at: https://iocm.noaa.gov/standards/DRAFT+-+SOMP+SDB+Addendum+Chapters+1+and+2_+01.09.2026.pdf
- The April 2024 SOMP may be downloaded or viewed at: <https://iocm.noaa.gov/standards/SOMPFinal2024.pdf>
- The 2020 NOMECE Strategy may be downloaded or viewed at: <https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-07/NOMECEStrategy.pdf>
- The 2024 NOMECE Strategy Implementation Plan may be downloaded or viewed at: https://www.noaa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-01/2024%20NOMECE%20Implementation%20Plan_FINAL.pdf

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Paul Turner, NOAA Integrated Ocean and Coastal Mapping, 240-429-0293, iwgocm.staff@noaa.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

I. Request for Technical Feedback

The NOMECE Council and IWG-OCM issued this FRN to solicit public input that will inform the IWG-OCM's refinement of the SDB-addendums to the Bathymetry and Data Management chapters of the April 2024 SOMP. Specifically, the IWG-OCM is looking for feedback to address technical aspects relevant to the scope and content of the SDB addendums.

II. Background

The SOMP encourages use of national standards and best practices to guide all ocean mapping actions in order to ensure the widest access to, use of, and integration of data while minimizing duplication of effort and archiving of ocean and coastal mapping data in publicly accessible repositories and databases. Collecting, processing, and archiving data to established standards expands its utility for multiple uses. Ocean mapping data are required to meet many Federal government missions. To make the most of every survey mile collected, the IWG-OCM works with and encourages participation from partnering federal, state, local, academic, private industry, and non-profit organizations on mapping activities, data collection, and data sharing. Pursuant to Objective 2.1 of the NOMECE Strategy, the April 2024 SOMP was drafted to encourage consistency in data acquisition, stewardship, and data management for seafloor mapping. The SOMP is organized into the following seven chapters:

(1) Data Management – The data management chapter covers methods for effective data management, metadata, and archive techniques, which allow data to be accessed by and shared freely with the public.

(2) Bathymetry – The bathymetric data chapter focuses on procedures for collecting, processing, and delivering bathymetry acquired by multibeam, single beam, and phase-discriminating sonar, and light detection and ranging (lidar) systems and satellite-derived bathymetry. This chapter summarizes best practices for: positioning,

system calibration and Quality Assurance/Quality Control (QA/QC) techniques, coverage and resolution, uncertainty, tides and water levels, and general gridded data specifications.

(3) *Seabed and Lakebed Backscatter* – The backscatter data chapter focuses on establishing common backscatter acquisition and processing methods, acoustic signal corrections, and image processing steps leveraging existing guidelines and recommendations from the Marine Geological and Biological Habitat Mapping (GeoHab) Backscatter Working Group (BSWG), as well as expert input from government, industry, academic institutions, and other relevant bodies.

(4) *Water Column Sonar* – The water column sonar chapter focuses on collecting, processing, and delivering raw and interpreted backscatter from single beam and multibeam echosounders (MBES). This chapter summarizes best practices for system configurations, operating frequencies and depth ranges, system calibration, QA/QC techniques, and analysis, and interpretation of backscatter.

(5) *Side Scan Sonar* – The Side Scan Sonar (SSS) chapter focuses on collecting, processing, and delivering SSS data. This chapter summarizes best practices for acquisition standards and system set-up, range scales, frequencies and ping rates, coverage requirements, positioning, system calibration, QA/QC techniques, and derivation of products.

(6) *Sub-bottom* – The sub-bottom profiling chapter focuses on common system types, practical survey design, conventional acquisition procedures, processing protocols, data formats, and publication of subsurface imaging data. The chapter describes the standard operating procedure for the use of single-channel acoustic systems that commonly operate in the 0.2 to 24 kilohertz (kHz) frequency range to remotely image the surface morphology and near-surface stratigraphy.

(7) *Magnetometer* - The magnetometer chapter focuses on general magnetic theory as it relates to anomaly detectability, factors that influence data quality, instrument configuration and selection, platforms, coverage specifications, testing and calibration, and resolution/line spacing based on survey objectives.

Authority: 33 U.S.C. 883e; 33 U.S.C. 3501 et seq.

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