



January 20, 2021

Dear Members of NOAA's **Science on a Sphere Team**,

I am delighted to commend you for your superior performance in building NOAA's Science On a Sphere (SOS) community. The SOS is NOAA's most far-reaching and dynamic education and outreach tool. It is a tremendous technology for engaging the public in understanding the NOAA mission, and your contributions through it have reinforced our reputation like never before!

With over 170 Science On a Sphere exhibits on display worldwide, our reach extends to some of the largest and best known public-serving science centers and museums, including Smithsonian's Natural History Museum. Working together, you have built and sustained an active user network with over 154 member institutions that collaborate with NOAA to improve their work and ours. Through this remarkable network, NOAA science reaches nearly 70 million people every year – an extraordinary impact that makes even NASA's outreach look average.

Your SOS network helps us understand public interests and guides us on how to best serve these interests with our data. These partners showcase NOAA's work on an ongoing basis with very little additional effort provided by NOAA to maintain these relationships and exhibits. In the 15-year history of the program, only 2% of all SOS installations have been removed at existing facilities. This history of success speaks to the lasting power of this technology and its sustained interest from our partners and the public viewers. We use the sphere at 8 NOAA facilities to showcase NOAA's work. At NOAA Headquarters, I have used the sphere to brief the White House Science Advisor, and it is used for nearly all VIP visitors, including Congressional visits, media events, and science and education meetings.

External institutions that have an SOS tell us how much they appreciate NOAA and how the sphere benefits their efforts and helps the public understand the value of the government to their lives. Ron Kagan, CEO of the Detroit Zoo said that the "Science On a Sphere at the Detroit Zoo seems to have its own field of gravity, the way it pulls our guests in. It's a powerful tool that motivates learning in a fun way - as if one were an astronaut observing Earth from outer space."

Because of NOAA's ability to provide real-time data and to continuously evolve the technology and support a user network, there is a significant commercial market built around NOAA's SOS program. The SOS data catalog has tremendous value for the private sector as well as our education partners. NOAA's name gives the datasets a stamp of authenticity that is highly marketable. The other, commercial sphere-display companies use the SOS data catalog and have built their systems to be compatible with these data sets. Planetarium companies also market that they offer the SOS data catalog.

Thank you for your energy and expertise. The SOS has done an exceptional job making NOAA more visible and valued, and I expect to see NOAA's Science on the Sphere for many years to come.

With gratitude and respect,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tim Gallaudet".

Tim Gallaudet, Ph.D., Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)
Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere /
Deputy NOAA Administrator

