

Thank you for a few moments to speak to this distinguished commission.

I am from Thales GeoSolutions Pacific in San Diego. We are a primary NOAA contractor for nautical charting, along with our colleagues from our Alaska office. Over the years that we have been conducting multibeam echosounding for navigation safety in Alaska, we have also been working to improve our survey technology. From these improvements we have attracted the attention of fisheries scientists, and increasingly we have been carrying out fisheries habitat surveys in Alaska and California.

I bring your attention to this type of technology for two reasons, but first let me put on another hat for a second as the Director of Publications for the Marine Technology Society. You heard from MTS President Andy Clark in DC last November. The latest issue of the MTS Journal has a collection of papers about new seafloor mapping technology, including a paper by my colleagues. I recommend you review this issue as a good update on the state-of-the-art. One mapping enhancement we use is the capture and manipulation of the acoustic backscatter information in each beam and ping from a MBES. This results in accurately positioned and quantitative seafloor imagery that is analogous to the utility of air photos on land.

The first reason I bring this up is that it is fundamental to informed policy. Earlier, Walter Munk emphasized the need for basic understanding of water column phenomena for good science and policy. Similarly, a seafloor “Base Map” is essential as a foundation for seafloor issues such as resource management, biological studies, or evaluation of geological hazards.

As precedent, you may recall that a comprehensive but low-resolution start for mapping the US EEZ was the Gloria sonar survey program of the 1980's.

My second reason for directing your attention to this is a personal concern. Having heard about the great value of this type of seafloor mapping from marine biologists and those scientists who Husband fisheries resources, I wonder what the impact will be of this powerful information for these who harvest these resources. In our free and open society this technology is available to both “Husbanders” and Harvesters. Therefore I strongly urge that this type of fundamental information be made available to fisheries resource managers quickly or they could find themselves behind the technology and information curve.

Thank you.