



# National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Science Council

**DISCLAIMER:** This meeting occurred the morning of Tuesday, January 21, 2025, which was less than a day after certain executive actions were taken but before those actions were communicated to our organization, including how to comply with the various EOs' requirements. This includes the Executive Order on "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing". This meeting of the NOAA Science Council was focused on the recruitment, retention, and professional development of early career scientists, a topic that is critical to the agency's ability to conduct its scientific mission and serve the Nation. One presentation contained information on DEIA in the context of early career personnel recruitment and retention. These minutes are an official record of the proceedings of the NOAA Science Council meeting and are therefore captured accurately and diligently, without alteration. Since being informed of the EO and having received guidance on how to implement, the Science Council, along with all other NOAA entities, have ceased all DEI-related activities.

## **NOAA SCIENCE COUNCIL MEETING**

**January 21st, 2025**

**10:30 AM - 1:00 PM ET**

**Google Meet**

## **MEETING MINUTES**

### **ATTENDEES**



# National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Science Council

## *Executive*

Steve Thur, Chair  
Jose Garcia-Rivera, Vice Chair  
Miranda Bitting, Exec Sec  
Emily Nocito, Exec Sec  
Sharon Yaary, Exec Sec

## *Principal*

Sean Corson, NOS  
John Cortinas, OAR  
Mike Ford, NESDIS  
Clay Porch, NMFS  
Monica Youngman, NWS

## *Advisory*

Julie Carruthers, Scientific Integrity Officer  
Lonnie Gonsalves, LOTMC Chair  
Ben Hope, NLAC Chair  
Frank Indiviglio, NOAA Chief Information Officer Representative  
Alison Krepp, Social Science Committee Co-Chair  
Tony LaVoi, Chief Data Officer  
John McLaughlin, Office of Education Liaison  
Laura Newcomb, RDEC Chair  
Hendrik Tolman, Council of NOAA Fellows  
Jeremy Weirich, NOPP-C Chair

## *Other Attendees*

Roxie Allison-Holman, HDQ  
Peter Alsip, OAR  
Abigail Arnold, OAR  
Felipe Arzayus, NOS  
Tiffany Atkinson, OAR  
Christina Avery, NESDIS  
Lauren Balotin, OAR  
Tim Battista, NOS  
Tamara Battle, OAR  
Wendy Bragg, NMFS  
Jean Brodeur, HDQ  
Max Brown, NOS  
Karin Bucht, OAR  
Alexander Bukvich, OAR  
DaNa Carlis, OAR  
Alicia Cate, HDQ  
Alicia Cheripka, OAR  
Rob Cifelli, OAR  
Adam Clark, OAR  
Alyssa Clevestine, NMFS  
Sarah Cooley, OAR  
Morgan Corey, NMFS  
Kaylie Costa, NMFS  
Brian Cromwell, NWS  
Tom Dang, NWS  
Sarah Davis, OAR  
Megan Deehan, OAR  
Elvis Diaz, NESDIS  
Kaitlyn Edelmaier, NWS  
Zachary Erickson, OAR  
Gabrielle Farina, OAR  
Joseph Fillingham, OFA  
Samantha Garrett, NWS  
Mary Gauthier, NESDIS  
Medha Gelli, OAR  
Gigi Giralte, NWS  
Yvette Gray, OFA  
Jessica Gwinn, OAR  
Rachel Hager, HDQ  
Pam Heinselman, OAR  
Larry Hopper, OAR  
Fiona Horsfall, OAR  
Claire Huang, NOS  
Jim Jenkins, OAR  
Andrew Kaiser, NOS  
Monica Keim, NMFS  
Elizabeth Keller, NMFS

Gabby Kitch, OAR  
Victoria Kromer, OAR  
Michael Kruk, OAR  
Charles Kuster, OAR  
Hannah Lachance, NMFS  
Lauren Lamb, NESDIS  
Christine Lazarescu-Lang, OMAO  
SheRee Lee, OAR  
David Legler, OAR  
Tracy Levstik, HDQ  
Kathy Longmire, OAR  
Tori Luu, OAR  
Terence Lynch, OAR  
Jonathan Marcus, NWS  
Annarita Mariotti, OAR  
Brooke McHansen, NESDIS  
Lauren Miller, OFA  
Nicole Miller, OAR  
Mary Najmi, NMFS  
Stephanie Oakes, NMFS  
Brittany Peterson, NWS  
Rochelle Plutchak, OAR  
Julie Price, NESDIS  
Nina Pruzinsky, OAR  
Alexandra Puritz, OAR  
John Ramsdell, NOS  
Haley Randall, NMFS  
Tamla Ransford, NESDIS  
Nia Rene, NOS  
Isha Renta, OAR  
Mark Rowe, OAR  
Katelyn Schockman, OAR  
Margo Schulz-Haugen, NOS  
Megan Schwinden, NOS  
Marc Singer, NWS  
Debbie Sinmao, OFA  
Chris Smallcomb, NWS  
Mackenzie Solomon, HDQ  
Gretchen Spencer, OAR  
Kevin Strongman, NWS  
Robbie Terry, NMFS  
Breanna Vanderplow, NOS  
Kenneth Vierra, OAR  
Suzi Webster, OAR  
Adam Weiner, NWS  
Natasha White, OAR  
Melissa Yenko, NMFS



### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS**

Notify Exec Sec at [science.council.execsec@noaa.gov](mailto:science.council.execsec@noaa.gov) within two weeks of the following meeting if any changes to the minutes are needed.

### **CHAIR ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- This is Dr. Jose Garcia Rivera's first meeting as a Science Council Vice Chair. His background is in meteorology and he comes from NESDIS.
- Sharon Yaary from the OAR Office of Science Support is the newest member of the Science Council Executive Secretariat.
- Steve brought up the new DOC Scientific Integrity Policy. He will be providing a briefing on it at the next Science Council meeting in February.

### **MINUTES**

- The November 5th meeting minutes were approved.

### **ACTION ITEM REVIEW**

- The Exec Sec reviewed current action items.

**BRIEFINGS:** Briefing materials are available in the 2025 Science Council Meetings folder on Google Drive.

- **NOAA Workforce Overview:** Yvette Gray  
10:40 – 10:55 AM (15 min)  
*Informational*

The NOAA Strategic Human Capital Plan establishes four strategic human capital goals to overcome NOAA's workforce challenges to achieve its mission (recruit, retain, develop, adapt). There will soon be adjustments for the Administrators' vision coming soon with NOAA's strategic human capital goals. 130% of NOAA's FY24 hiring goal of 1,685 achieved. There were 539 retirements, which is an increase compared to previous years. Yvette also briefed the Council on the workforce dashboard functionality. A majority of NOAA hires are for scientists, over 50% going to NWS. While it is predicted that there will be over 1,000 science hires projected for FY25, this may change due to the hiring freeze. Across NOAA most hires are 21-30 years old, white, and identify as male. General retention rate is 54% and projected to maintain that in FY25, though this too is subject to change due to the hiring freeze.

NWS requested data on retention rate before retirement from Yvette. Yvette confirmed she would send over the dataset.

- **Readout of Early Career Experiences Inquiry Form:** Tori Luu  
10:55 - 11:10 AM (15 min) [[slides](#)]  
*Informational*

PEER sent out an inquiry form for voluntary participation for early career experiences with 48 responses, with the majority of respondents coming from OAR and none of the respondents coming from OMAO. Most respondents came from Silver Spring, MD, were federal employees, had an advanced degree, and



## National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Science Council

had previously worked with NOAA (70%). Direct hiring authorities after internships/fellowships were a common pathway to federal employment. The top three hiring challenges faced by respondents were paperwork, navigating USAJobs, and timeliness of final offer letter. Most had a neutral hiring experience but felt like they received enough support and professional development once they started their roles.

The Chair reflected on the data in the slides and was happy to see that respondents said that they felt supported at NOAA.

Alison Krepp asked if the survey process will be repeated in the future. Tori said that if the Chair and Science Council supports a future opportunity for input, it could continue, though the cadence would need to be determined.

### **11:10 - 11:15 AM: 5 minute break**

- **Early Career Panel Discussion:** Panelists: Nia René, Gigi Giralte, Zach Erickson, and Wendy Bragg, Moderator: Emily Nocito

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM (60 min)

*Discussional*

1. What first attracted you to working at NOAA in your respective positions?  
Wendy had some prior experience working with NMFS. Gigi lined up an NWS position after a Pathways internship. Zach had some experience working for NOAA and NASA at Goddard Space Flight Center. Nia was hired at NOAA through an academic program fellowship through a NOAA Cooperative Institute.
2. What opportunities have you had as an early career professional, and how did you take advantage of them?  
Wendy took advantage of a Fisheries mentoring program. Gigi found an undergrad leadership program at UCAR helpful as an attendee. Zach participated in the NOAA Mentoring Program which was helpful but did not offer a lot of options. He started an Early Career group at PMEL. Nia was able to leverage funds from the field and non-profits.
3. What do you feel is the most pressing challenge for early career professionals at NOAA? How can programs, leadership, and/or the systems in place assist with this challenge?  
Wendy elaborated on challenges with career opportunities, negotiating salary/leave, and finding the right role. There is an early career focus for younger hires, which is not the case for prior experience, such as a career prior to NOAA. Gigi said the process from Pathways to a federal employee was not a straightforward process on USAJobs. Needed finalized transcripts of a degree and there was a lack of communication from HR to management. Zach said challenges included starting new roles and using grant funds from different institutions and timing. Nia said that challenges were complex hiring processes, lack of support from HR, and placement of new hires in fitting roles (internship v. scientist).



## National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Science Council

4. What is one idea you have that would make NOAA a better place to work for early career scientists?

Gigi said she never received a formal final offer letter (conversion memo), which would have helped in the hiring process. Nia said to prioritize DEIA initiatives. Zach said there were issues with grant fund transfers from his prior location to NOAA.

Steve remarked that there was room for improvement with no surprises with lack of communication and complexity of processes.

NESDIS asked if there was any support for grant funds for early career folks. Zach responded that there is limited support in the process and that turning to leadership may be helpful but is not always applicable.

OAR asked if there was access to an ongoing mentorship program. Wendy said she was paired with a “buddy” on new processes but limited options for specific career development.

NWS asked how the panelists feel connected at the line office and agency levels and avenues for improvement. Gigi responded that she felt very connected at NWS and her office and found camaraderie with those in the same situation on social media. Nia said NCCOS senior scientists have been available for advice and mentoring. Since NOAA is a large workplace, it can be difficult to find the right forum to connect across the agency, but willingness has been shown.

The Vice Chair asked if any panelists attended the NOAA NOW (NESDIS) training for new hires. Wendy said she did not participate in NOW, but another course and noted how large the organization is with a limited perspective. Zach did not attend the NOW training but received orientation at PMEL. Robbie Terry mentioned that NMFS has a new all day employee orientation that should be attended within 6 months of onboarding.

The Chair asked if any panelist could solve one challenge, what would it be? Zach said he would increase computing power since he only has a laptop. Gigi said that there is a difference between onboarding between new full-time employees and conversions for interns at NWS and short timeframe for applying for HR benefits. Nia requested new scientific projects. Wendy suggested a new buddy system for new roles.

The Chair said that, based on the information during this meeting, the Science Council will develop a one-pager with the help from the Exec Sec on early career challenges and opportunities.

- **RDEC Early Career Hiring Initiatives White Paper Summary:** Felipe Arzayus  
12:15 - 12:30 PM (15 min)  
*Informational*

The NOAA Science Council directed the formation of a DEIA Tiger Team to identify practices and solutions for hiring and retention of underrepresented groups in 2021. The RDEC updated this white paper in August 2024 and is now reporting back to the Science Council. This white paper defines early Career professionals as within 10 years of their highest graduate degree and can include gaps of 5-10 years due to certain circumstances. Initiatives were organized by themes (workforce, outreach, inreach, accountability, and internships, fellowships, and Cooperative Science Centers). Every line office has



## National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

### Science Council

offered DEIA initiatives since 2022. Direct hire authorities and student pathways offered positive hiring opportunities. Challenges included initiatives limited to the “investing in workforce” category, lack of new hiring mechanisms, low diversity of senior feds on hiring panels, and recruitment bias from leads at labs, offices, and forecast offices.

The Chair said there was a call for Line Office initiatives and asked if the team heard back on which initiatives were the most effective. Felipe said they did not, but that they did hear back from offices that reported priorities. The Chair was curious about feedback for lessons learned purposes.

At the end of the meeting, the Chair reiterated that this meeting was meant to be informational and there were at the peak 99 participants on the call (about twice the usual number of participants). The Chair also took a moment to announce the new NOAA Scientific Integrity Officer, Julie Carruthers, who replaced Cynthia Decker after Cynthia’s retirement a few months ago. He noted that Julie will be formally introduced at the next meeting in February. Additionally, the Science Council Exec Sec team is working on a Science Council 2025 Briefing Calendar for topics at future meetings, so principals should expect to provide feedback on briefing topics and areas of interest.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The next NOAA Science Council will be February 18th at 10:30 am ET.

#### **ACTION ITEMS**

- Send info on retirements as related to retention, i.e. folks leaving before retirement age? - Yvette Gray
- Science Council Exec Sec will develop a 1-pager with principal input about some of the early career issues that have been raised, and then Chair (Steve Thur) will raise items for discussion with OHCS leadership (Hakeem Basheerud-Deen)
- Once the draft RDEC Early Career Hiring Initiatives White Paper is ready, Exec Sec will send it out for Science Council review