2009 Annual Report: Letter from Susan K. Avery, President and Director

In 2009, WHOI was able to navigate a volatile global economy and meet a variety of challenges head-on. In a fashion typical of WHOI, we adapted to unprecedented financial pressures with collective, if occasionally painful, deliberation. We are fortunate to be a private and independent organization, with our fate determined by steps we choose to take rather than by measures imposed by others. Yet inevitably, consensus is difficult in stressful times.

Staff at all levels of the Institution worked with our trustees to determine options and implement solutions on two critical fronts: the need to transition from a defined benefit to a defined contribution retirement plan in order to restore long-term stability to our employee benefits package, and the need to strategically trim costs and increase revenue in order to reduce a shortfall in our unrestricted budget. The ultimate choices did not satisfy everyone, but everyone had an opportunity to participate in the process, and our course is now set for the greater good of all.

As usual, the Institution's research and engineering efforts added new highlights to our reputation and to our common book of knowledge about the ocean. *Nereus*, the latest addition to our remarkable fleet of remotely-operated and autonomous vehicles (in this case a hybrid of both), made history by returning a human presence 6.8 miles down to the Mariana Trench, the deepest part of the ocean.

The new Ocean Observatories Initiative got underway, with WHOI as the lead implementing organization for a program that will transform ocean science through far-reaching, ocean-observing infrastructure. We also received a green light from the National Science Foundation to proceed with the next phase in the design and construction of the replacement vehicle for *Alvin*.

Overall, WHOI received $43 million in funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, nearly all of it for top-rated research proposals previously submitted but unfunded because of federal budget constraints. We attracted 12 new scientific staff members to the Institution, the MIT/WHOI Joint Program awarded 30 degrees and our researchers continue to be national and international leaders in the ocean science community.

We also formed new connections that we expect will bring additional opportunities for research collaboration. We refreshed our ties with the Korea Ocean Research and Development Institute, strengthened our relationships with Cornell University on undersea robotics and with Rensellaer Polytechnic Institute on ocean informatics, and are looking forward to expanded work in the Red Sea with King Abdullah University for Science and Technology. In December, I and several of our scientists traveled to Copenhagen to participate in the first Oceans Day at the World Climate Conference, where we joined with our partners in the Woods Hole Consortium to host a dinner for guests that included President Obama's Chief Science Advisor John Holdren. We expect the result to be new opportunities to work with international organizations and agencies in ocean science and ocean policy.

Scientific research remains fundamentally an enterprise of curiosity, driven by a spirit of exploration and discovery. But WHOI does not focus on data collection and analysis alone. We also strive to share knowledge, to identify and communicate how the natural world affects all of us and how, in turn, our activities change terrestrial, atmospheric, and marine environments. WHOI has always been forward-looking by nature, building on what we know by going to sea with new vehicles, new sensors and new hypotheses. Curiosity knows no economic cycles, and so we begin a new year as strongly motivated as ever to understand Planet Ocean and to inform the public of everything we learn.

WHOI's President and Director, Susan Avery, speaks at the first Oceans Day at the World Climate Conference held in Copenhagen.

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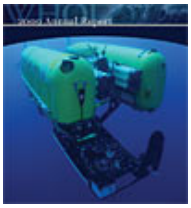

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» President and Director's Office

» Woods Hole Consortium Delegates Participating in U.N. Climate Change Conference
WHOI News Release

» Three Woods Hole Scientific Institutions Forge Alliance to Address Societal Issues
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