



WOODS HOLE OCEANOGRAPHIC INSTITUTION

Dr. Daniel J. Fornari

Senior Scientist, Geology & Geophysics Dept. and Chair, Ridge 2000 Program

To: Dr. Chris Barnes and Dr. Brian Bornhold
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Dr. Martin Taylor
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Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright
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From: Dr. Daniel J. Fornari, Senior Scientist - Woods Hole Oceanographic Inst.
Ridge 2000 Chair – US Mid-Ocean Ridge Science Program of the National Science Foundation

Date: August 13, 2009

Subject: Unequivocal support for conducting the R/V Marcus Langseth marine geophysics research cruise at the Endeavour Hydrothermal Vents Marine Protected Area

Dear Drs. Barnes, Bornhold, Taylor and Watson-Wright:

As Chair of the US Ridge 2000 Program (www.ridge2000.org), I am writing to you to express our very strongest support for the planned marine geophysics research cruise to be conducted in the Endeavour Hydrothermal Vents Marine Protected Area. We are aware of the last-minute legal challenge to the foreign vessel clearance that was issued by the Canadian government authorities for this work. The merits of that challenge are without basis in scientific fact or practice. We also believe that the nature of the legal challenge, and that it was brought at the very last minute before the field work was planned to commence, represents a specious attempt to block an important and worthy scientific endeavor that has far-reaching positive benefit to the people of Canada, to US researchers involved in the work, and to the ocean observatory programs in both Canada and the US (which have heretofore enjoyed a superbly collaborative relationship to the benefit of both efforts).

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The R/V Langseth operator, Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, and the US and Canadian marine geophysics communities have collaborated extensively in the past on various research programs, and specifically in the run-up to this upcoming data collection effort. The technical program and the plans for the scheduled Endeavour Marine Protected Area geophysical work have been well communicated to all concerned for over the past year. The planned program also includes serious protocols that will attempt to mitigate any potential risks to marine life as well as conform to the highest level of industry practices in regards to this type of marine geophysical survey.

The Ridge 2000 Program's Steering Committee, as representing the US mid-ocean ridge science community, is deeply concerned about this legal challenge to a top-rated science field program in an area of critical importance to our understanding of mid-ocean ridge magma chamber processes and how they influence a myriad of hydrothermal processes at the seafloor and in the water column above the ridge crest. It is precisely this type of basic research that is needed to properly assess how mid-ocean ridges operate at various temporal and spatial scales, and to deduce the geological, chemical and biological processes involved at ridge crest hydrothermal sites.

We implore you to do all possible to turn back the legal challenge so as to not impact the impending sailing of the R/V Langseth. If there is anything that the Ridge 2000 Program can assist with in this regard please do not hesitate to call upon me. I would also ask you to please include this letter in your supporting documentation that helps refute the legal challenge or to forward it to any legal or other standing body that has influence in these matters.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel Fornari

Senior Scientist and Chair – Ridge 2000 Program of the National Science Foundation