

Letter from USSSP and USAC

27 March 2020

Dear U.S. IODP community members,

The emergence of the global COVID-19 pandemic has had profound effects on academic scientists and their projects, and IODP is no exception. As you know, several upcoming IODP meetings have been postponed, including those of the ECORD and *JOIDES Resolution* Facility Boards. In addition, last week brought the news that the ECORD Science Operator and Japan's MarE3 were forced to postpone IODP Expedition 386 (Japan Trench Paleoseismology) because global travel restrictions impeded their ability to provide enough technically proficient personnel to support the expedition. These unwelcome but obviously necessary steps have been damaging to the scientific aspirations of both the overall IODP program and its individual scientists, but we are confident that these setbacks are temporary and IODP will successfully resume its remarkable record of achievement once the crisis has passed.

More immediately, we want you to know that both the U.S. Science Support Program (USSSP) and its advisory committee (USAC) are fully functional. Although Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory, USSSP's home institution, has issued a work-from-home mandate, USSSP staff and LDEO administrators are able to carry out all core USSSP activities remotely. Subawards are being set up and administered, invoices are being paid, and travel reimbursements are being issued.

Similarly, all of USAC's activities are being conducted without interruption. Applications to sail on upcoming Expedition 395 (Reykjanes Mantle Convection and Climate) will be reviewed in an accelerated fashion once the application deadline (March 30) has passed. Proposals for post-cruise research, pre-drilling activities, and workshops are being handled normally. It is important that you recognize and take advantage of these opportunities to keep the program moving forward in spite of the present challenges.

In short, although we cannot currently support travel, USSSP and USAC are otherwise "open for business" and we strongly encourage you not to let the current interruption in operations preclude you from planning and pursuing drilling-related science. Planning for the future of scientific ocean drilling is forging ahead; if you haven't already, we also strongly encourage you to take time to review the first draft of the 2050 Science Framework and [submit comments](#) **before the deadline of March 31**. Your input is key to developing a robust science framework for scientific ocean drilling as well as to document strong community support and involvement.

As for the *JOIDES Resolution*, derrick repairs are underway in Panama with a projected completion time of late April. After that, the plan is for the ship to transit to drydock in

Amsterdam, where the thruster seals will be replaced. Once this work is completed, a 3-week Engineering Testing expedition will be implemented beginning in late May, followed by Expedition 395 beginning on June 26.

With regard to drilling proposal submission deadlines, you can check on any developments at the iodp.org announcement page, which currently states that “proponents experiencing difficulty meeting the upcoming submission deadline [April 1] should [contact the Proposal Manager](#) to request an extension.”

The professional and personal challenges posed by COVID-19 are substantial but USSSP and USAC are committed to fully supporting your efforts during this difficult period. Please feel free to contact either of us with questions or concerns.

Above all, we hope that everyone is healthy, safe, and secure.

Sincerely yours,

Carl Brenner
Director, U.S. Science Support Program

Marta Torres
Chair, U.S. Advisory Committee for Scientific Ocean Drilling