

Letter from the *JOIDES Resolution* Facility Board Chair

18 September 2020

Dear IODP community members,

I am writing to provide an update on the *JOIDES Resolution* schedule. As you know, at the August 2020 JR Facility Board (virtual) meeting we made the difficult decision to postpone all previously scheduled expeditions due to uncertainties from the pandemic and internal politics in Brazil. To be blunt, this has not been a good year for JR IODP operations.

However, the JRSO has made heroic efforts to implement productive operations, such as [Engineering Testing Expedition 384](#), which was recently successfully completed. We owe everyone at JRSO a huge “thank you” for the way they have endeavored to make the best out of a very bad situation. In addition, the ship’s owner, Overseas Drilling Limited (ODL), has made important improvements to the JR during two maintenance periods in 2020: the drilling derrick has been considerably strengthened, the thrusters have been repaired, the ship has been painted, and improvements have been made to the drill floor. Given these improvements and the money saved from lack of operations in 2020, I refer you to the August 2020 JRFB meeting [Consensus Statement #5](#) stating that the JRFB will in the future be scheduling the JR through FY 2024.

In a major achievement for our community this year, the 2050 Science Framework is about to be unveiled. This represents a revolutionary new way that our science can be developed and I want to thank everyone involved in making this framework so innovative. The future looks very promising for our science.

At the August 2020 JRFB meeting, we spent a lot of time discussing scheduling. The JRFB and JRSO worked together to discuss options. These were ranked by the Board and we continued to iterate the scheduling options after the meeting. The JRSO has implemented COVID-19 protocols wherein cabins are not shared and COVID tests are conducted before leaving for the ship, after arriving at the port, and again two days later before boarding the JR. To successfully implement all of these protocols, only a subset of the science party will be able to sail for each expedition. High core recovery expeditions will, therefore, be difficult to implement during this time. [The new JR schedule plan](#) was derived after considering the following factors:

- Ability to assemble the ODL crew, JRSO staff, and the science party at a given port
- Whether the expedition can be implemented with a reduced science party
- Weather window
- Ease of permitting for the expedition
- Transit times
- Inclusion of postponed expeditions

Once again, the JRSO has done a fantastic job in putting this [schedule plan](#) together. They will be undertaking preparation work initially because no science party will be needed. This will involve installation of the re-entry systems for the South Atlantic Transect expeditions (390/393), as well as preparing Hole U1309D for re-entry (e.g., retrieving a lost caliper) for future scheduling of proposal 937 (currently at the JRFB). During the pandemic, the preparation work will be conducted out of Norway where the JR parent company is located.

You will notice that I have called the JR schedule a “schedule plan.” This is intentional because 2020 has shown us that schedules may need to be changed. We believe the new schedule plan will be implementable. However, we do need to remain flexible about the possible need to further modify this plan in order to keep people safe.

I have also received several questions about the JR ship track and when the JR will leave the Atlantic. For new proposals, we are asking the community to focus on the Pacific and Indian Oceans, as seen in the calls for proposals in October 2019, April 2020, and [October 2020](#). The ship track responds to proposal pressure – and we have good proposal pressure in the Atlantic at this time with a good cache of proposals still to implement. Also, remember that we will be scheduling the JR through 2024.

While 2020 has not gone well so far, it will get better. Please know that the JRSO, JRFB, and NSF are working closely together during these trying times to ensure our program continues to produce transformational science even during a pandemic.

Sincerely yours,

Clive R. Neal
Chair, *JOIDES Resolution* Facility Board
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