

Letter from the JRFB Chair

27 March 2023

Dear IODP Community,

I write today to address two topics: 1) to update you on plans for operations of the *JOIDES Resolution* through the end of IODP (end September 2024), and 2) to summarize plans for the upcoming JRFB meeting and beyond. As you consider this information, I hope we all continue to celebrate the return to “normal” JR operations and the successes of Expeditions 391/397T (Walvis Ridge Hotspot), 392 (Agulhas Plateau Cretaceous Climate), 390 and 393 (South Atlantic Transect), 397 (Iberian Margin Paleoclimate), and 398 (Hellenic Arc Volcanic Field). Several of these expeditions did face significant challenges, whether from the continued effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, from weather or difficult drilling conditions, or from equipment issues, but Siem, the JR Science Operator (JRSO), and all others involved in JR planning and operations have continued to show amazing flexibility, adaptability, and resilience in dealing with those challenges. All involved deserve our heartfelt thanks.

I suspect that you are already aware of NSF’s recent [Announcement of the Non-Renewal of the JOIDES Resolution Operations and Maintenance Cooperative Agreement](#) and its accompanying FAQs, which state that JR operations will not be extended beyond the end of IODP. This is not the news we had hoped for FY2025-28; in addition, one of the accompanying FAQs contains information that has a direct impact on JR activities planned for FY2024. That FAQ states “During the later part of FY 2024, the vessel will undergo a brief period of demobilization.”

The JRSO has received written confirmation that the Cooperative Agreement between NSF and the JRSO requires the JR to be demobilized before the end of JRSO’s current award (30 September 2024). This possibility was discussed at the JR Facility Board (JRFB) scheduling meeting in May 2022, which is why Expedition 404 was placed on the FY24 schedule conditionally. Specifically, JRFB Consensus Item 2 recommended removing Proposal 979 (Expedition 404) if demobilization timing and/or funding constraints prevented implementation of the entire [FY24 drilling schedule recommended by the JRFB](#). As a result of the guidance from NSF to the JRSO contained in the Cooperative Agreement, Expedition 404 has been removed from the schedule in order to demobilize the JR by the end of FY24.

I know this is disappointing news, but operational, financial, and scheduling constraints provide no other option. The JRSO has notified the Expedition 404 co-chiefs of this decision. They are disappointed, as you might expect, but motivated to pursue any future opportunities that may develop to implement this project.

The JRFB’s 2023 annual meeting will be held in a hybrid format in May, with the in-person component at AGU Headquarters in Washington, D.C. The meeting will focus on actions needed to ensure efficient operations through the end of IODP, as well as considerations of

steps needed to transition into the future of scientific ocean drilling (e.g., the fate of proposals presently residing at the JRFB). We also hope to hear more about NSF's plans to seek community input via workshops, working groups and a National Academy of Science Decadal Survey to generate a realistic and sustainable blueprint for the next generation of scientific ocean drilling.

Included in those considerations for the future will be a discussion about "virtual expeditions," which are activities that might provide future opportunities for collaborative research. A JRFB Working Group on "virtual expeditions" was established in response to Action Item 6 from the 2021 JRFB meeting and Action Item 2 from the 2022 JRFB meeting, with the tasks of defining the minimum requirements for a research effort to be considered a "virtual expedition," and of developing recommendations for procedures related to the evaluation, endorsement, and scientific outcomes/scientific legacy of a "virtual expedition." The JRFB Working Group includes representatives from other IODP entities also considering this topic (e.g., USAC, J-DESC, ESSAC, and ANZIC), ensuring communication between IODP partners that has been invaluable for helping us identify commonalities in our respective approaches to this subject. The Working Group's results-to-date will serve as the starting point for the JRFB's discussion, and its final report will be posted at [IODP.org](https://iodp.org) once that report has been accepted by the JRFB.

This will be the first JRFB meeting for new science members Rob McKay (Victoria University of Wellington) and Huayu Lu (Nanjing University), and for new ANZIC representative Ron Hackney (The Australian National University). These new members replace former science members Marguerite Godard (University of Montpellier) and Ryuji Tada (Chiba Institute of Technology), and ANZIC representative Mike Coffin (University of Tasmania), all of whom we thank for their service to scientific ocean drilling.

As a reminder, the minutes, consensus statements, and action items from the upcoming JRFB meeting will be posted at [IODP.org](https://iodp.org) later this summer. The equivalent items from previous JRFB meetings – including the May 2022 hybrid meeting – also are available at [IODP.org](https://iodp.org).

As the community looks for innovative ways to address a changing landscape of scientific ocean drilling science in the future, the JRFB will continue to fulfill its mandate to "... provide operational and management oversight of the JOIDES Resolution as part of the International Ocean Discovery Program (IODP)," as well as to help develop effective mechanisms for transitioning to that future. As these efforts proceed, feel free to contact me with questions or comments about the JRFB and its activities.

Stay safe and healthy, and I look forward to meeting you soon.

Best wishes,

Larry Krissek
Chair, *JOIDES Resolution* Facility Board