

Letter from the USAC Chair and USSSP Director

16 March 2023

Dear Colleagues,

By now you have all likely assimilated the National Science Foundation's March 6th [announcement](#) that the *JOIDES Resolution* will terminate operations in 2024. We share the disappointment of everyone in the U.S. and international scientific drilling community.

In our opinion, the U.S. geoscience community has clearly articulated the need for continued U.S. scientific ocean drilling capabilities and has, in response to NSF guidance and requests, engaged in extensive and valuable planning for the future. Our significant investment of time, effort, and resources over the last five years delivered the [2050 Science Framework](#), the [Science Mission Requirements Report](#), and responses to an [NSF Dear Colleague Letter](#) and a *JOIDES Resolution* Facility Board Request for Information to provide input on the transition from the IODP Science Plan to the 2050 Science Framework. The decision not to support JR operations in 2025-2028, driven primarily by fiscal concerns, is a painful one for the community, and will leave numerous compelling JR proposals undrilled.

NSF is now also [hitting the pause button](#) on entering into Conceptual Design for a new U.S. globally ranging vessel to succeed the JR, choosing instead to implement a [new decadal survey](#) of the ocean science community "to guide investments in research, infrastructure, and workforce development." While it is entirely understandable that NSF cannot guarantee the eventual funding and procurement of a new vessel, we had hoped that the vessel planning process could at least begin, given its very long timeline of a decade or more.

However, NSF's announcement notes that new planning for other future scientific ocean drilling efforts will need to begin this year (presumably even as the decadal survey is implemented), and signals a commitment to supporting that process. Already, the Foundation has reached out informally to us about the possibility of USSSP organizing a community workshop to explore innovative ways to conduct scientific ocean drilling research with the considerable financial resources that will be available after the JR is retired. We await a formal, more detailed request for assistance from NSF on this topic and will keep the community informed as these plans become clearer.

USSSP and USAC will also, of course, continue to support the remaining JR operations in IODP, ensuring that this remarkable program finishes with a flourish.

We realize our community has sustained a setback, but we must continue to press the case for the necessity of U.S. scientific ocean drilling activities, participate in the decadal survey, and do everything possible to ensure a strong community voice in the process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rebecca Robinson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rebecca Robinson
Chair, U.S. Advisory Committee for Scientific Ocean Drilling

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Brenner', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carl Brenner
Director, U.S. Science Support Program