



NOAA's  
Office of Marine  
and Aviation Operations

# Strategic Plan 2021-2025

*People-Driven Performance*



## Director's Message

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These are challenging times for our country. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unimaginable loss of life, cost millions of jobs, and shattered our daily routines. Protests resulting from centuries of racial injustice are rocking American cities large and small. Partisanship is tearing at the fragile bonds that hold us together.

At times, we despair. We allow doubt to pervade our vision of the future. We wonder whether, and how, we can use our lives to make a positive mark on a tumultuous world. But I remain as confident as ever that the work OMAO performs on behalf of the American people is doing exactly that. I hope you do, too.

Our work touches the lives of every single American, every single day. We keep communities safe, protect precious environmental resources, and ensure the nation's economic wellbeing. Whether conducting hurricane reconnaissance and research, assessing the health of our oceans, or performing emergency surveys for navigation hazards that help ports reopen quickly, our work leads to greater security, efficiency, and prosperity.

In a world of new and bigger challenges, we can only accomplish our ambitious mission by thinking bigger, being bolder, and demanding even higher performance. This new OMAO five-year strategic plan is a roadmap that documents where we must go in three key areas: People, Platforms, and Culture.

**People:** Three words on this plan's cover – People-Driven Performance – send an unmistakable message about our top priority. We can only maintain a high-performing workforce with the continual development and diversification of our personnel. We are implementing new systems to improve recruiting, training, and retention. We are developing more transparent paths for

advancement. And we are integrating a Total Worker Health Program into the everyday lives of all OMAO personnel.

**Platforms:** OMAO is on the frontlines of NOAA's missions. We collect high-quality environmental data and support scientific discoveries that push the boundaries of our Earth observation capabilities. But to meet future requirements, we must reimagine our platforms, programs, and facilities to ensure greater efficiency, more days at sea, and more agile platforms that match the needs of the organization.

**Culture:** To meet our mission, we must set the highest standard for our organizational culture. Inspired teams and fully engaged individuals achieve amazing results – and fostering such an environment requires a culture of safety, unity, respect, and excellence. We must value one another's differences, recognize that diversity remains our greatest strength, and work every day to ensure that every voice is heard.

This strategic plan isn't just another document destined to live the rest of its days acquiring dust on the back corners of a forgotten shelf. It is a declaration of our principles, a reminder of the crucial importance of our daily work, and a statement of our accountability to the people we serve, to each other, and from the OMAO leadership team to you. With your commitment, the roadmap this plan envisions will become our future reality.

### Rear Admiral Michael J. Silah

Director OMAO and  
NOAA Corps

October 02, 2020





# NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations

## Strategic Plan | 2021 – 2025

### Vision

Protecting environmental security through intelligence and stewardship.

### Mission

Optimize NOAA's observational platforms and unique workforce capabilities to meet NOAA's Science, Service, and Stewardship missions.

### Goal 1: People

Sustain a High Performing, Healthy, and Satisfied Workforce.

1.1 Attract and retain a specialized, expert, and diverse workforce to meet NOAA's current and emerging mission requirements.

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1.2 Optimize workforce training and opportunities for professional development, career progression and building leaders at all levels.

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1.3 Implement industry-preferred staffing models and employee-focused organizational changes to optimize retention and mission performance.

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1.4 Execute a Total Worker Health Program to promote and prioritize each person's health and well-being to facilitate workforce availability and minimize attrition.

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### Goal 2: Platforms

Optimize platform operations and mission system capabilities.

2.1 Optimize ship and aircraft annual operations.

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2.2 Execute NOAA Ship, Small Boat and Aircraft Recapitalization Plans to modernize and upgrade operational capability.

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2.3 Fully implement a Long-Range Maintenance Plan to maximize reliability for ships and aircraft.

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2.4 Strengthen the NOAA Dive Program to improve performance and sustainability of marine operations.

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2.5 Develop and implement an enterprise Facilities Plan for enhanced mission performance and productivity.

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2.6 Fully implement the OMAO Uncrewed Systems Operations Center to meet NOAA's mission needs.

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### Goal 3: Culture

Advance a culture of safety, respect, unity, and excellence.

3.1 Ensure a safe and respectful workplace for every employee.

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3.2 Promote a culture of unity, inclusion, and excellence across all OMAO activities.

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3.3 Advance performance excellence and agility with enhanced tools, business processes and standard operating practices.



## Goal 1: People

### Sustain a High Performing, Healthy, Diverse and Satisfied Workforce.

This strategic plan focuses on modernizing and maximizing our platforms and infrastructure while improving recruitment, training, and retention of a world-class workforce. People are our priority. Continual development and diversification of our workforce are essential to mission success. Training and developing each employee to realize their potential and promoting overall well-being through Total Worker Health are centerpieces of our goal. OMAO will focus the strategic planning to ensure it supports our workforce through the following steps: establish an efficient and accessible HR system to empower our people to meet current, and emerging requirements; enrich our capabilities and performance through increased diversity achieved with action-oriented strategies; develop and train our workforce to advance in their career tracks; reward exceptional performance; and integrate a Total Worker Health Program into the everyday lives of all OMAO personnel.

#### Objective 1.1. Attract and retain a specialized, expert, and diverse workforce to meet NOAA’s current and emerging mission requirements.

##### FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
1.1.1. Increase the diversity of the OMAO workforce as a force multiplier for high mission performance with a focus on technical positions (General Engineering Occupation, Electrician Technician Occupations), leadership and officers.	●	●	●	●	●
1.1.2. Join and actively participate in NOAA’s diversity groups to learn best practices from across government and contribute to actionable strategies for advancing diversity goals.	●	●	●	●	●
1.1.3. Improve the quality of life for deployed crews through onboard technologies.	●	●	●	●	●
1.1.4. Apply a minimum of 40% of total recruiting resources toward identifying OMAO specific qualified candidates at Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions.		●	●	●	●
1.1.5. Establish and operate the Civilian Personnel Management Division.		●			

*“These are challenging times for our country. We are fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and the legacy of racism. For me, this is a time of personal reflection. This is also a time of action. I’m pledged to listen deeply to your experiences, support and empower your voices, and lead with compassion, empathy, and commitment to lasting solutions. Diversity remains our greatest strength but is meaningless without inclusion. OMAO’s actions to ensure all people are recognized and respected will require the same commitment from each of us.”*

~ RADM Michael J. Silah, OMAO Director



**Objective 1.2. Optimize workforce training and opportunities for professional development, career progression and building leaders at all levels.**

FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
1.2.1. Deliver comprehensive leadership training annually to first line Supervisors to build emotional intelligence (EQ) competencies and skills in workforce inclusion, leading with compassion, empathy and empowering each team member’s voice.	●	●	●	●	●
1.2.2. Promote training opportunities fairly to all members of OMAO at varying levels in technical, management and leadership positions.	●	●	●	●	●
1.2.3. Implement training management system to plan, manage, and track personnel and unit-based training.	●	●			
1.2.4. Update Wage Mariner position descriptions.	●				
1.2.5. Launch Wage Mariner Hiring Portal.	●				
1.2.6. Develop training jacket for every Wage Mariner and conduct gap analysis between current and required qualifications.	●				
1.2.7. Complete OMAO Training Matrix to include required training and qualifications for every Wage mariner, civilian, and NOAA Corps Officer.	●				
1.2.8. Leverage NOAA and other internship programs to bring a 20% increase in hiring of candidates from underrepresented groups to technical OMAO positions such as CIO IT student positions.			●	●	●
1.2.9. Complete Training Recapitalization Plan.			●		
1.2.10. Finalize career succession ladders to define experience, training, and qualifications required for promotion.				●	
1.2.11. Close the completion gap between the OMAO workforce’s current and required training and qualifications.					●





**Objective 1.3. Implement industry-preferred staffing models and employee-focused organizational changes to optimize retention and mission performance.**

NOAA Corps Mariner Staffing FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
1.3.1. Increase NOAA Corps officer billets to 379.	332	344	356	368	379

Professional Mariner Staffing FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
1.3.2. Increase staffing to 453 by 2024.	401	413	424	453	482
1.3.3. Achieve 92% staffing level of authorized positions and conduct pilot rotational staffing for all departments on one ship.	●				
1.3.4. Implement rotational staffing models on 25% of fleet and achieve 96% staffing level of authorized positions.	●				
1.3.5. Implement rotational staffing models on 50% of fleet and achieve 96% staffing level of authorized positions		●			
1.3.6. Implement rotational staffing models on 75% of fleet and achieve 96% staffing level of authorized positions.			●		
1.3.7. Implement rotational staffing models on 100% of fleet and achieve 96% staffing level of authorized positions.				●	

NOAA Corps Aviator Staffing FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
1.3.8. Increase the number of new pilots per year necessary to reduce "days deployed per pilot per year" to less than 180 days to meet approved aircraft recapitalization and aircraft allocation plan requirements.	6	5	7	5	5

Civilian Aviation Staffing FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
1.3.9. Increase the number of civilian positions per year to ensure a 96% civilian staffing level.	9	4	2	5	3
1.3.10. Increase civilian staffing to safely and efficiently support the requirements of annual aircraft allocation and approved aircraft recapitalization plans.	2	26			

**Objective 1.4. Execute a Total Worker Health Program to promote and prioritize each person’s health and well-being facilitating workforce availability while minimizing attrition.**

*FY Milestones:*

	21	22	23	24	25
1.4.1. Increase OMAO employee training and utilization of NOAA’s Employee Assistance Program.	●	●	●	●	●
1.4.2. Establish medical standards and supporting policies for NOAA Corps officers.	●				
1.4.3. Achieve 100% medical readiness screening for NOAA Corps officers annually and wage mariners biannually to reduce crew shortages.	●				
1.4.4. Complete a Fatigue at Sea crew endurance analysis and create training and standard operating procedures to reduce mariner fatigue.	●				
1.4.5. Implement random annual DOT drug testing for OMAO safety sensitive positions.	●				
1.4.6. Establish physical fitness standards and assessments for NOAA Corps Officers and provide access to healthy lifestyle resources for shipboard life.	●				
1.4.7. Complete Stress Management Training for all OMAO workforce.		●			



## Goal 2: Platforms

Optimize platform operations and data collection capabilities.

OMAO is on the frontlines of NOAA’s missions. We operate research vessels to explore, chart, and study our nation’s oceans. We conduct data collection and emergency survey operations by air and sea before, during, and after extreme weather events. Essential to OMAO’s success in sustaining these critical capabilities and meeting NOAA’s mission requirements is the readiness of its fleet. NOAA’s future requirements will call upon OMAO to reimagine its platforms, programs, and facilities, while instilling sustainable, disciplined business practices. Success will necessitate greater operating efficiency and tempo, more days at sea, and facilities that match the growing needs of the organization. OMAO is ready to meet these challenges and remains dedicated to sustaining the highest standards in operational performance.

NOAA’s network of observational tools is the foundation of its environmental intelligence. The observational platforms and related infrastructure require recapitalization and maintenance to optimize data collection capabilities. OMAO must use an integrated approach that includes ship, aircraft, small boat, and facilities recapitalization while incorporating uncrewed systems and other emerging technologies.

### Objective 2.1. Optimize ship and aircraft annual operations.

*FY Milestones:*

	21	22	23	24	25
2.1.1. Base fund 3,380 Days-At-Sea annually.	2,800	2,945	3,220	3,380	3,620
2.1.2. Maintain SMS Level 3 Safety for aviation operations.	●	●	●	●	●
2.1.3. Safely execute signed AAP up to 5,500 annual flight hours.			●		
2.1.4. Fully implement SMS for marine operations.					●





**Objective 2.2. Execute NOAA Ship, Small Boat and Aircraft Recapitalization Plans to modernize and upgrade operational capability.**

Ship and Small Boat FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
2.2.1. Perform Detailed Design and Construction (DD&C) for NAV.	●	●	●	●	●
2.2.2. Conduct requirements analysis and preliminary design for Class C.	●	●	●	●	●
2.2.3. Conduct requirements analysis and preliminary design for Class B.	●				
2.2.4. Perform DD&C for Class B.		●	●	●	●
2.2.5. Develop and integrate a NOAA Small Boat Recapitalization Plan to modernize and upgrade operational capacity.			●		
2.2.6. Deliver NAV 1.				●	
2.2.7. Begin DD&C for Class C.					●
2.2.8. Deliver NAV 2.					●

Aircraft FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
2.2.9. Establish full operational capability for first King Air.	●				
2.2.10. Establish initial operational capability for Gulfstream 550 for delivery in 2023.			●		
2.2.11. Establish full operational capability for Gulfstream 550 and process G-IV SP (N49RF) for disposal.			●		
2.2.12. Update analysis of alternatives for P-3 replacement to reflect changes in operational requirements and, technology/capability improvements in new sensors and alternative aircraft.				●	

*“These new state-of-the-art vessels will provide our professional mariners with the versatile and capable tools they deserve to safely and effectively advance NOAA’s at-sea data collection mission and expand our knowledge of the world’s oceans..”*

~ Randy TeBeest, OMAO Deputy Assistant Administrator



**Objective 2.3. Fully implement a Long-Range Maintenance Plan to maximize reliability for ships and aircraft.**

FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
2.3.1. Execute DHC-6 Twin Otter planned 60-month corrosion inspection.	●	●	●	●	●
2.3.2. Fully integrate progressive maintenance with MRP when required.	●				
2.3.3. Minimize total ship deferred maintenance backlog and maintain at less than 10% of annual maintenance requirements.		●	●	●	●
2.3.4. Execute comprehensive mid-life repair period on NOAA ship <i>Ronald H. Brown</i> .		●	●		
2.3.5. Execute P-3 planned depot maintenance.			●	●	

**Objective 2.4. Strengthen the NOAA Dive Program to improve performance and sustainability of marine operations.**

FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
2.4.1. Expand accessibility of training through effective use of mobile training classes and new delivery technologies.	●	●			
2.4.2. Identify and implement dive community best practices that enhance a culture of safety.	●				
2.4.3. Initiate planning and analysis to support improved facilities and partnerships nationwide and analyze alternatives for a Federal Aquatic Training Center location.	●				
2.4.4. Deliver agile hyperbaric treatment assets to ensure broader flexibility and safety for dive supported missions across the entire fleet.		●			
2.4.5. Expand Federal collaboration opportunities for joint training, collaboration on safety protocols, training, operations, and shared facilities.		●			
2.4.6. Improve and expand Diving Medical Technician and Chamber Operator training in support of marine operations.		●			
2.4.7. Begin operations for a Regional Federal Aquatic Training Center.				●	





**Objective 2.5. Develop and implement an enterprise Facilities Plan for enhanced mission performance and productivity.**

FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
2.5.1. Acquire a state-of-the-art facility to accommodate growth in AOC staff and additional aircraft at Lakeland, FL.	●				
2.5.2. Assess the future requirements for MOC-P.	●				
2.5.3. Establish short-term UMS operating center in Gulfport, MS.	●				
2.5.4. Begin construction at Ketchikan Facility to support homeporting of the NOAA Ship <i>Fairweather</i> .	●				
2.5.5. Execute repairs and dredging on Pier Romeo in Charleston, SC.	●				
2.5.6. Begin construction on pier facilities at Newport, RI.		●			
2.5.7. Establish Long-Term Uncrewed Systems Operating Center in Gulfport, MS.		●			

**Objective 2.6. Fully implement the OMAO Uncrewed Systems Operations Center to meet NOAA’s mission needs.**

FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
2.6.1. Complete a comprehensive OMAO UxS Program plan.	●				
2.6.2. Implement the NOAA UAS Program in OMAO.	●				
2.6.3. Execute a phased staffing plan to acquire dedicated OMAO UxS Program personnel.		●	●	●	●
2.6.4. Execute an ongoing series of pilot projects to test, evaluate, and transition to UxS operations.		●	●	●	●
2.6.5. Execute a phased plan to integrate dedicated staff and equipment in key locations.		●	●	●	
2.6.6. Create a UxS dashboard for tracking UxS operations.		●			

*“Uncrewed airborne and maritime systems are critical tools to meet NOAA’s prioritized airborne and at-sea priorities, now and in the future. Our new Uncrewed Systems Operations Center will facilitate efficient and coordinated application of these technologies to deliver critical products and services to the nation.”*

~ RDML Nancy Hann, OMAO Deputy Director for Operations



## Goal 3: Culture

Advance a culture of safety, respect, unity, and excellence.

An OMAO culture of safety, unity, respect, and excellence is essential to achieving and maintaining the highest levels of performance. Respect and appreciation for each person’s unique perspectives and contributions underpin our organization’s operating protocols. We value one OMAO team that focuses on supporting the development and motivation of all OMAO team members, both civilian and uniformed, and inspiring the very best efforts of our entire workforce. To realize this success, OMAO’s people and work units must understand and respect differences, be aligned with tools, metrics, efficient business processes, and standard operating practices. We will focus on a discrete and shared set of strategic targets and demonstrate measurable accomplishments over the five years of this plan. In OMAO, people drive performance and inspired teams and fully engaged individuals will achieve amazing results.

### Objective 3.1. Ensure a safe and respectful workplace for every employee.

*FY Milestones:*

	21	22	23	24	25
3.1.1. Conduct recurring mandatory Sexual Assault/Sexual Harassment (SASH) training.	●	●	●	●	●
3.1.2. Demonstrate a culture of respect and appreciation for differences in race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and life experiences through annual OMAO sponsored training, listening sessions, robust dialog, and continuous learning experiences.	●	●	●	●	●
3.1.3. Continue the OMAO online safety climate assessment survey, share results, and set organizational priorities based on feedback.	●	●	●	●	●
3.1.4. Provide employees with tools and support to fully transition to a culture of accountability that promotes fair and respectful treatment of all team members.		●	●	●	●



**Objective 3.2. Promote a culture of unity, inclusion, and excellence across all OMAO activities.**

FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
3.2.1. Promote belonging and inclusion for each employee with annual commitments to increase employee satisfaction by 5% annually and recognizing the benefits of diverse contributions.	●	●	●	●	●
3.2.2. Modify leadership performance plans for all supervisors to include elements for demonstrating emotional intelligence (EQ) and leading with compassion, empathy, and continuous learning.	●	●	●	●	●
3.2.3. Recognize and reward high performing individuals, teams, and platforms.		●	●	●	●
3.2.4. Strengthen adherence to policies and practices in the everyday culture of OMAO.		●	●	●	●
3.2.5. Define OMAO performance targets in annual performance plans and billet descriptions to improve alignment and increase accountability.		●	●	●	●



*“...The moments we have come together to solve problems are the most memorable because it emphasizes how alone we are when out at sea. Our teamwork and resourcefulness is always a common theme to getting the mission done. It’s like when Apollo 13 astronauts had to create a carbon dioxide filter on the fly with what they had. While less dramatic than the movie, every voyage has its own set of unique challenges that we always find a way to overcome.”*

~ Captain Jesse Stark, Bell M. Shimada Ship Commander

**Objective 3.3. Advance performance excellence and agility with enhanced tools, business processes and standard operating practices.**

FY Milestones:

	21	22	23	24	25
3.3.1. Adjust operating protocols to increase agility and quickly pivot to changing conditions, new mission needs, trends, technologies, and innovations.	●				
3.3.2. Standardize project management, governance, and execution to improve transparency, discipline, and overall project success throughout OMAO.		●	●	●	
3.3.3. Refresh and deploy IT and management tools to better support OMAO’s business operations.		●	●		
3.3.4. Implement a prioritization process to better address unfunded, under-resourced and neglected initiatives.		●			
3.3.5. Institutionalize exit interviews and other lessons learned mechanisms across all activities for continuous improvement and operating as a learning organization.			●		

