Message from MTS Leadership

by: MTS Leadership

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We are deeply saddened at the loss of the crew of the submersible Titan. Our underwater community is close-knit and deeply connected; many of us worked with and knew those onboard. We appreciate and extend our gratitude for the efforts of the hundreds of volunteers and professionals who worked tirelessly on the complex and difficult search. That numerous agencies and commercial partners, from multiple nations, rapidly responded and deployed cutting-edge technologies is a testament to the strength and cohesion of the maritime sector – and emblematic of the Mariner's Code that connects all seafarers. Along with the entire marine technology community, MTS leadership offers our sincere condolences and sympathies to the families and friends of the Titan's crew.

MTS was established in 1963, and our member community has a long history and broad experience in the technology and business of submersibles. In 1960 [redacted] USN (Ret), was aboard the first submersible to reach the deepest known point in the ocean – the Challenger Deep. Dr. [redacted], [redacted]—all winners of the annual MTS and Society for Underwater Technology (SUT) Captain [redacted] Award for Ocean Exploration—have made hundreds of submersible dives between them, including to the deepest points in each ocean basin. Also, one of our founding members, Dr [redacted], led the development of crewed submersibles and was the driving force behind the creation of the DSV ALVIN, which has completed 5,000+ safe dives, including to the wreck of the RMS *Titanic*.

Today, one of our many professional committees is the Submarine Committee, formerly named the Manned Underwater Vehicles (MUV) Committee. This committee has a long history of organizing the leaders in this field at a technical convening alongside the Underwater Intervention conference. As with all our committees, sections, and events, MTS depends upon volunteer members to share their expertise and address challenges and opportunities relevant to their specific discipline. We recognize the global expertise and experience of the Submarine Committee and commends its annual conference as an example of valuable service to the marine technology community.

In 2018, this group of volunteer members collaborated to draft a cohesive, and directed, message to OceanGate on best practices for the safe development and operation of new submersible technologies. The content of this draft letter has been widely shared by the media in recent days. The Submarine Committee never signed or sent this draft letter to OceanGate and the draft letter was not approved or issued as a formal statement on behalf of MTS or the committee. The letter draft was shared, though,

with OceanGate by a committee member during the drafting process. OceanGate CEO Stockton Rush and the Submarine Committee chair engaged in discussions and agreed to disagree on the technical topics of the letter. Recent media coverage has highlighted OceanGate's views on these technical topics, as expressed in a 2019 company blog post. This history is shared here with no opinion on the underlying considerations raised - it is important, however, to accurately acknowledge the history of these events.

While this recent incident has been very challenging, it is important to acknowledge that ocean technology is in an important growth phase. We believe that advancements in the development and use of marine technologies are essential to support responsible and sustainable use of the ocean. Enabled by underlying technologies such as graphical processing units (GPUs), global internet connectivity, and artificial intelligence and machine learning, the marine technology field is expanding rapidly. New instruments such as synthetic aperture sonar and undersea lidar are showing us the undersea features of our ocean planet in rich new detail. Emerging sensors such as in-situ gas analyzers and environmental DNA samplers enable broad area bio-geochemical monitoring to better understand the entire water column and ecosystem. A diverse and rapidly expanding array of ocean platforms such as gliders, uncrewed undersea vehicles (UUVs), and uncrewed surface vehicles (USVs) bring human awareness to the entirety of our ocean planet at low cost and large scale. Collectively, these developments are catalyzing a new phase of the blue economy.

MTS is a professional society that convenes experts from government, academia, and industry on topics of interest to the community and disseminates that expertise broadly. As a professional society, MTS was not established to and does not develop rules, classify technologies, or regulate individuals or organizations working in marine technology; rather, we inform those who do. Our operating practices and policies have been designed to empower volunteers and informed technical experts to serve the wider marine technology community—to advance best practices, to inform standards and regulations, and to catalyze the development of new ocean and underwater technologies. As we did in 2018, and we have done since our founding in 1963, MTS continues to act in that fashion and operate in accordance with our exempt purpose.

[redacted], President
[redacted] Immediate Past President
[redacted], President-Elect
[redacted], Chief Executive Officer