

Friends of NOAA Coalition

September 5, 2008

The Honorable Robert Byrd
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Commerce
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate

The Honorable David Obey
Chair, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Alan Mollohan
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Senators Byrd, Cochran, Mikulski and Shelby and Representatives Obey, Lewis, Mollohan, and Frelinghuysen:

As members of the Friends of NOAA Coalition, we want to thank the Committees for their continuing support for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in Fiscal Year 2009 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations legislation. We were particularly pleased to see the robust funding level of \$4.3 billion (House) and \$4.5 billion (Senate) proposed for NOAA, which builds on the budget request of \$4.1 billion submitted by President Bush. Given recognition of the importance of securing additional funding for NOAA, we request that Congress include an anomaly in the imminent Continuing Resolution (CR) to address the high priority demands being placed on the agency.

While we appreciate your efforts to increase NOAA's funding level, we are very concerned about the impact of an extended CR on essential NOAA programs. A CR would impose a *fifth year of flat funding* for NOAA. The continuing erosion in funding support due to inflation has significantly compromised the capacity of agency programs and services that support key U.S. industries and resource management efforts, and has also precluded investment in core research, monitoring and management activities, such as those focused on understanding and responding to climate change.

As we stated in our March 2008 letters to the Committees, we firmly believe that funding for NOAA must increase to \$4.5 billion to address near-term demands being placed on the agency. We are very concerned that despite the release of the congressionally mandated report of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy in 2004, NOAA funding has essentially remained flat –at \$3.9 billion for the past four fiscal years (FY'05-FY'08), resulting in approximately \$400 million in reductions to core services, operations, and R&D programs as a result of inflation. Despite broad recognition of the importance of NOAA programs to our nation's security and economy, this erosion of funding has jeopardized the agency's capacity to meet the many near-term demands being placed on it. These concerns will be

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further exacerbated by the default strategy of an extended CR, which could maintain spending at \$3.9 billion for a fifth year for the agency, with potentially devastating impacts on critical programs, including those shared with its partners and stakeholders.

We are particularly concerned about requiring NOAA to absorb the significant increases required in FY 2009 for the development and procurement of satellites and remote sensing platforms. These platforms, which support weather forecasting of hurricanes, severe thunderstorms and tornadoes, and wildfire suppression as well as long-term climate and monitoring research, are a high priority for the agency and the nation. Satellites and other remote sensing platforms have played key roles in saving lives during this year's record number of tornadoes. Given the importance of these procurements, the costs associated with their delay, and the potential for meeting some of these funding needs by diverting resources from other programs— in particular ocean and coastal programs that have incurred the majority of the funding cuts suffered by the agency over the past four years— an extended CR at the FY'08 level has the potential of dramatically reducing NOAA's ability to meet its core mission requirements.

Additional concerns surround impacts associated with funding cuts accompanying a level budget, including restrictions on building NOAA's capacity to enhance our understanding and response to climate change and limitations on the availability and operation of NOAA ships and aircraft due to escalating fuel costs. Enhancing ocean and climate research and observations is essential if we are to reduce uncertainty and improve climate forecasts at the global, national, and regional levels, as well as begin adaptive methods to help make our ocean and coastal environments more resilient to the impacts. This information will greatly assist decision makers, business leaders, and individuals as they attempt to address the impacts of climate change, particularly along the coast where vulnerability to sea level rise, coastal storms, habitat loss, and public infrastructure damage is most acute. Similarly, observations from aircraft are essential to improve our understanding of hurricanes so that forecasts can be improved. Congress should also consider the constraints placed on ship and plane availability and operations due to unforeseen fuel costs. Lack of access to these platforms significantly impacts research and monitoring activities, such as fishery surveys, ocean climate studies, hurricane monitoring, and hydrographic surveys.

The increased funding included in the President's FY 2009 request, which is further increased in both the Senate and House Committee marks, reflect collective agreement that additional resources are necessary for NOAA to fulfill its priority mandates. Therefore, we strongly encourage Congress to support an anomaly that, at a minimum, secures sufficient funding in the CR to allow the agency to move forward with the procurement process for critical satellites and sensors, help advance our understanding of climate change, and maximize utilization of NOAA ships and aircraft. In addition to this immediate request, we also want to reemphasize the importance of Congress pursuing the broader investment strategy and commitments for NOAA captured in the FY 2009 spending bills, funding which is essential to ensuring the agency maintains the capacity to meet the growing demands and challenges facing the nation, its resources and economy.

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We greatly appreciate the generous support the Committees have provided over the past few years and remain committed to working with you and your staff on securing funding for NOAA in FY 2009 and beyond. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Consortium for Ocean Leadership
Joint Ocean Commission Initiative
University Corporation for Atmospheric Research
U.S. Chamber of Commerce Space Enterprise Council
National Association of Marine Laboratories
Sea Grant Association
The American Red Cross
Reinsurance Association of America
South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium
AccuWeather, Inc.
Raytheon Company
National Weather Service Employees Organization
Shipbuilders Council of America
National Fisheries Institute
The Weather Coalition
Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, Purdue University
Department of Atmospheric Sciences, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
The Weather Channel
Weather Risk Management Association
National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges
Coastal States Organization
Scripps Institution of Oceanography
Campaign for Environmental Literacy
Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute
Old Woman Creek NERR Advisory Council
Ohio Sea Grant College Program
F.T. Stone Laboratory, Ohio State University
Center for Lake Erie Area Research
Great Lakes Aquatic Ecosystem Research Consortium
WeatherBank, Inc.
Commercial Weather Services Association
University of Oklahoma
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution
Institute for Exploration
Vaisala Inc.
Restore America's Estuaries
University of Puerto Rico Sea Grant College Program
Belle Baruch Institute
Skidaway Institute of Oceanography, Savannah, Georgia
Hatfield Marine Science Center, Oregon State University

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University of Connecticut Marine Programs
Center for Marine Sciences and Technology, North Carolina State University
American Rivers
The University of Texas Marine Science Institute
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Institute of Marine Sciences
Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, University of Maryland Center for Environmental
Science
Conrad Blucher Institute for Surveying and Science, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium
The Ocean Foundation
The Ocean Project
North Carolina State University
United Fishermen's Marketing Association, Inc.
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
Partnership for Interdisciplinary Studies of Coastal Oceans
Marine Conservation Biology Institute
Fugro Pelagos, Inc.
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West Marine
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Department of Soil, Environmental, and Atmospheric Sciences, University of Missouri
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Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, Cornell University
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