

Robert B. Gagosian, Ph.D
Co-Chair, Friends of NOAA Coalition
President, Consortium for Ocean Leadership
Testimony Regarding the Fiscal Year 2009 Appropriation Act
Before the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC
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I am pleased to submit testimony on behalf of the Friends of NOAA Coalition, which represents approximately 50 different organizations, institutions, and groups from the academic community, the environmental community and the private sector. I am also the President of the Consortium for Ocean Leadership, which represents 95 of the leading public and private ocean research and education institutions, aquaria and industry. As supporters, stakeholders and partners of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Friends of NOAA Coalition respectfully requests an appropriation of at least \$4.5 billion for NOAA in FY09. This is the minimum amount of funding required for NOAA to fulfill its mission.

We are encouraged that for the first time in recent memory, the President's FY09 budget request is higher than the previous year's allocation. However, the President's budget falls far short of that necessary for NOAA to fulfill its missions addressing the many challenges facing our planet. Given the recommendations of the National Academies of Sciences report entitled "*Earth Science and Applications from Space: National Imperatives for the Next Decade and Beyond*," we know that there are considerable fiscal needs for the NOAA satellite programs. While these are critical programs that we support, we encourage you to avoid further erosion of funding for the core NOAA programs that have protected lives and livelihoods of millions of Americans for more than three decades.

NOAA's funding has remained flat at \$3.9 billion since FY05, yet NOAA's requirements and obligations have increased dramatically. For instance, the reauthorization of the Magnuson Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act brings with it many new requirements for NOAA, including ending overfishing by 2010. Given the many daunting environmental challenges facing our nation, NOAA has been unfairly tasked to do more with less money each year. In fact, an annual inflationary increase of just three percent since FY05 would yield a \$4.4 billion budget for NOAA in FY09. Given the more than \$300 million plus up in the satellite and climate sensor programs proposed in the President's FY09 budget, we believe that \$4.5 billion is truly a bare minimum necessary for NOAA to maintain its core program capabilities.

As you know, NOAA is a critical science agency, providing decision makers with critically important information and services that enhance the nation's economy, national security and quality of life. The America COMPETES Act states that "NOAA shall be a full participant in any interagency effort to promote innovation and economic competitiveness through near-term and long-term basic scientific research and development..." We contend that as a participant in the America COMPETES Act, NOAA should be considered in the budget doubling effort.

Clearly, climate change is one of the most prominent scientific issues facing society with enormous societal and economic repercussions. NOAA is the lead federal agency supporting research for global climate change and modeling its causes and impacts. As the climate changes, the global transfer of heat, carbon and water are altered in manners that have not been seen for millions of years. We are just now beginning to see the impacts of a rapidly changing climate through increased intensity of extreme weather events, acidification of ocean water, sea level rise, alteration of ocean water temperature, currents, and habitat; all which have enormous implications for human and wildlife. The ability to understand, predict, mitigate and adapt to a changing environment is a monumental domestic and international challenge that NOAA is leading.

The largest obstacle to understanding how the earth system works and thus providing insights to climate change is access to reliable, quality and consistent data streams. Atmospheric and ocean data are accessed through a variety of platforms including radar, satellites, ships and ocean observatories. This information is translated into products and services including forecasting the weather, predicting natural hazards, as well as managing, conserving and restoring our agricultural, coastal and ocean resources. The economic and societal impacts from mismanaging these resources is tremendous as are the benefits of being able to better predict catastrophic weather events such as hurricanes, tornados, blizzards, floods, droughts and heat waves. In our opinion, NOAA provides a significant return on investment for our nation's economy and citizenry.

We are very supportive of congressional and agency efforts to transition various NOAA initiatives into competitive programs. For instance, the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) has moved from a set of distinct regional projects into a nation-wide competitive program that coordinates, shares, transforms and transitions ocean data into services to protect public health and help manage coastal resources. NOAA has also begun to competitively fund the Coastal and Estuarine Land Protection (CELP) program that protects important coastal and estuarine areas that are threatened by conversion to other use. We encourage you to reinforce the notion of competitive programs with respect to climate, weather, ocean, coastal and Great Lakes research, conservation and management programs in your FY09 measure.

Last year, the Administration released the interagency Ocean Research Priorities Plan and Implementation Strategy to provide a framework for research investments in ocean science for the coming decade. We believe that dedicating additional resources toward these priorities in FY09, as recommended in the President's FY09 budget, is an important step forward towards fulfilling the recommendations of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy.

We greatly appreciate the bipartisan manner in which your committee addressed many of the pressing needs for NOAA last year. Unfortunately, most of the progress made in your FY08 measure was lost in the final consolidated appropriations act. Considering that NOAA programs strongly impact the lives of all Americans, we hope that you will once again craft a bill that recognizes the critical research, products and services that NOAA provides to the nation.

On behalf of the Friends of NOAA Coalition, thank you for your consideration of our request.