

March 16, 2006

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice and Science
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Capitol Building, S-146A
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Commerce, Justice and Science
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Capitol Building, S-146A
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Mikulski:

As supporters, stakeholders, employees and partners of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), we are writing to strongly encourage you to provide the agency with an appropriation of \$4.5 billion in fiscal year 2007.

NOAA is critical to protecting our ocean resources, coastal communities, and economy. In fact, weather and climate sensitive industries account for about one-third of the Nation's GDP. An investment of \$4.5 billion averages out to \$15 per person annually. For that small amount, each American receives weather forecasting, hurricane tracking, tsunami warnings, navigational information, fisheries management, hazard mitigation, scientific research, and local community assistance. NOAA affects and provides important services to all Americans and it is time for Congress to demonstrate its commitment to the NOAA programs that are vital to our economy and to the health and well being of every resident.

NOAA is also one of the premier science agencies in the Federal Government, providing decision makers with critically important data, products and services that promote and enhance the nation's economy, security, environment, and quality of life. For example, it was NOAA -- and its underlying science enterprise -- that enabled the delivery of accurate and timely information regarding the impending landfall of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, a forecast that saved tens of thousands of lives. A better understanding of the oceans not only benefits coastal communities. In fact, economists have estimated that altering planting decisions based on improved El Niño and La Niña forecasts would save U.S. farmers \$265-\$300 million.

The \$4.5 billion we are recommending for NOAA would fully fund the President's FY'07 budget request, restore funding for core programs, and address all the areas of concern and priority that have traditionally been supported by Congress. It would allow enhancements in the development of an integrated ocean and atmospheric observing system; increased research and education activities, expand ocean conservation and management programs; and provide critical improvements in infrastructure (satellites, ships, high performance computers, facilities), and data management. Such an increase would represent significant progress toward addressing recommendations contained in the reports of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission.

We fully appreciate the very tight fiscal constraints facing the nation and the difficult decisions associated with allocating limited financial resources. Given NOAA's role as the lead federal agency for our oceans and atmosphere, and our increasing appreciation and understanding of the human health, national security, and economic impacts associated with the oceanic and atmospheric physical and biological processes, we firmly believe that an increased investment in NOAA is needed now.

We appreciate your consideration of our collective support for NOAA and its scientific enterprise and management responsibilities as you develop the fiscal year 2007 appropriation bills.

Sincerely,

Alaska Oceans Program
Alliance for Earth Observations
American Rivers
American Zoo and Aquarium Association
Campaign for Environmental Literacy
Coastal States Organization
Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education
Environmental Defense
Furgo Pelagos, Inc.
Institute for Exploration
JASON Project
Joint Ocean Commission Initiative
Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors
Marine Conservation Biology Institute
Marine Technology Society
National Association of Marine Laboratories
National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges
National Council for Science and the Environment
National Estuarine Research Reserve Association
National Federation of Regional Associations for Coastal and Ocean Observing
National Fisheries Institute
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
National Weather Service Employees Organization
Natural Resources Defense Council
Oceana
Sea Grant Association
Shipbuilders Council of America
The Nature Conservancy
The Ocean Conservancy
The Ocean Foundation
The Weather Coalition
United Fisherman's Marketing Association, Inc.
University Corporation for Atmospheric Research
West Marine

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