

FRIENDS OF NOAA COALITION

<http://www.friendsofnoaa.org/>

January 11, 2007

Honorable Alan Mollohan
Chairman
Subcommittee on Science, Space, Justice
and Commerce
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Science
and Justice
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Science, Space, Justice
and Commerce
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Science
and Justice
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Mollohan, Senator Shelby, and Representative Frelinghuysen:

As supporters, stakeholders, users, partners, and the employees' union of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), we – the Friends of NOAA Coalition – want to express our concerns about the serious adverse impacts that are beginning to compromise NOAA's ability to carry out its missions by limiting the agency to the proposed FY 2007 House passed funding level. The FY 2007 House level of \$3.4 billion is \$288 million below the President's request and more than half a billion dollars below last year's funding level. Coupled with reductions from the previous year, it is the Coalition's opinion that these reductions are jeopardizing NOAA's ability to conserve and manage ocean resources and protect the lives and livelihoods of our citizens all across the country.

Continuing to fund NOAA at \$3.4 billion could cost the U.S. economy over \$1 billion in unnecessary economic losses. Some specific examples include: significant economic hardship on the seafood industry due to fishery closures and increased threats to public health associated with the elimination of seafood quality and safety programs; termination of protected species program; inability to collect basic fisheries data in stock assessments necessary for management decisions; reduction of total allowable catch in almost all Alaskan fish stocks, lowering the value and revenues of Alaskan fisheries; failure to sustain conservation and recovery efforts for Pacific Coastal Salmon; and reductions to the Sea Grant College Program that would adversely impact both the Chesapeake Bay and Gulf of Mexico fisheries.

Additional adverse impacts are likely to threaten marine transportation through cuts to basic mapping and charting activities; hamper NOAA's capacity to respond to major oil and chemical releases; lead to the discontinuation of the operational Geographic Information System (GIS) and technology and mapping support to NOAA's National Hurricane Center in Miami. Space weather forecasts would also be reduced, increasing the treats to the electrical power grid, airlines, satellite operations and global navigation and communication networks.

The **Friends of NOAA** are supporters, stakeholders, partners, and unionized employees of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and exist to encourage the White House and the Congress to provide appropriate support for the agency as it carries out its mission of saving lives and livelihoods. For information about the Friends of NOAA, please visit www.FriendsofNOAA.org.

Cutting funding for NOAA will have adverse impacts related to the nation's weather enterprise and the major sectors of our economy that are weather-sensitive such as agriculture and our air transportation system. Continuing to operate the National Weather Service (NWS) at the House level will have adverse impacts on many programs but most pronounced is that at this funding level – coupled with the reductions NOAA has taken in the last few years - the NWS is forced to defer infrastructure maintenance and upkeep such as lightning protection for radars, mandated office inspections are postponed, critical staffing positions go unfilled, hazard awareness information outreach to the public is curtailed, and the necessary repairs and replacement of information technology systems to enable the NWS to operate as a 21st century weather service on behalf of the Nation's citizens is compromised.

Beyond the impacts to NOAA's existing portfolio of products and services, the House level impedes NOAA's ability to start vital new programs to meet its mission. For instance, NOAA would not be able to create a National Water Quality Monitoring Network necessary to fulfill the President's commitment in the U.S. Ocean Action Plan to fully implement the Harmful Algal Bloom Research and Control Act. NOAA would also be unable to implement a national Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) - the U.S. contribution to a Global Ocean Observing System and to the Global Earth Observation System of Systems. Full implementation of the recently updated Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act would also be seriously hindered.

These are just a few examples of the potentially devastating impacts that a large cut to NOAA's budget will have on the agency's ability to understand and predict changes in Earth's environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet our Nation's economic, social and environmental needs. Considering these impacts that the House mark will have on NOAA and the nation, we respectfully request that you fund NOAA at no less than the FY06 account levels adjusted for inflation.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Earth Observations
American Red Cross
American Rivers
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Baruch Institute for Marine and Coastal Sciences
Bigelow Laboratory for Ocean Sciences
Campaign for Environmental Literacy
Center for Coastal Studies, Texas A&M University
Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education
Council of Environmental Deans and Directors
Environmental Defense
Fugro Pelagos, Inc
Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies
Hatfield Marine Science Center
Hawaii Institute of Marine Biology
Institute for Exploration
Joint Ocean Commission Initiative
Maine Sea Grant College Program

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Marine Conservation Biology Institute
Marine Technology Society
Mote Marine Laboratory
National Association of Marine Laboratories
National Council for Science and the Environment
National Estuarine Research Reserve Association
National Federation of Regional Associations
National Marine Manufacturers Association
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
National Weather Service Employees Organization
Natural Resources Defense Council
Ohio State University
Oregon State University
Planetary Data, Inc.
Reinsurance Association of America
RS Information Systems
Savannah State University, Marine Science Program
Sea Grant Association
Scripps Institute of Oceanography
Shipbuilders Council of America
Skidaway Institute of Oceanography
The Nature Conservancy
The Ocean Foundation
The United Fisherman's Marketing Association, Inc.
The University of Oklahoma
The Weather Channel
The Weather Coalition
University Corporation for Atmospheric Research
University of Connecticut
University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute - Center of Marine Biotechnology
University of Missouri – Columbia
US Chamber of Commerce Space Enterprise Council
Vaisala Inc.
West Marine
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution
Wrigley Institute for Environmental Studies, University of Southern California

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