

# FRIENDS OF NOAA COALITION

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March 12, 2008

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

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

Dear Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Frelinghuysen:

As supporters, stakeholders, unionized employees and partners of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), we are writing to request the Subcommittee's support for an appropriation of \$4.5 billion in Fiscal Year 2009 for NOAA. The Administration's request of \$4.1 billion is appreciated but the proposed and necessary increase in support for NOAA satellites comes at the expense of many of NOAA's core programs.

NOAA's funding has remained flat, at \$3.9 billion, since Fiscal Year 2005. Assuming an annual inflationary rate of 3 percent, and using Fiscal Year 2005 as a baseline, the agency's budget would need to be \$4.4 billion in Fiscal Year 2009 just to remain level in constant dollars. The failure to keep up with inflation has led to severe erosion of funding for base programs. The services NOAA provides, including weather and severe storm forecasting, spill response, ocean observing, habitat restoration and conservation, and research on climate change, fisheries, and coastal and marine ecosystems have all been impacted. The funding recommendation we propose would both provide the resources needed for the satellite programs and avoid the adverse impact it could have on NOAA's core programs. With the expected growth in funding required for NOAA satellite programs, it will be important to avoid further erosion of core program funding.

NOAA is 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, national security, environmental protection, our quality of life and our competitiveness in the global marketplace. In fact, the America COMPETES Act, signed into law last August, 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 and the promotion of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education consistent with the agency mission, including authorized activities."

NOAA also plays a principal role in the stewardship and management of the nation's oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes resources. As the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy found, the nation's coastal and estuarine resources and habitats are under tremendous pressure from growing threats, such as over-fishing, coastal development, pollution, and invasive species. NOAA needs a robust budget to help

conserve and restore threatened coastal habitat and improve the science-based management of coastal and marine resources, and recreational and commercial fisheries. These critical coastal and marine habitats and resources provide enormous ecological and economic benefits to the nation.

We are very supportive of Congressional efforts to transition various NOAA initiatives into competitive programs. For instance, the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) is moving from a set of distinct regional projects into a nation-wide competitive program that will coordinate, share, and transform ocean data into products and services to protect public health and help manage ocean and 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. The Senate version of the Fiscal Year 2008 appropriations bill reinforced this notion of competitive programs with respect to ocean, coastal and Great Lakes research; weather research; and expanded support for existing competitive programs related to climate change research, Sea Grant, environmental literacy grants, and other areas. This is an important step forward and we recommend the Congress revisit this approach in the Fiscal Year 2009 appropriations process. By funding programs on a competitive basis, NOAA will strengthen its ties to its stakeholders, expand its intellectual capacity, and improve the depth and the breadth of the knowledge acquired and the applications implemented.

NOAA is also the lead federal agency supporting research for global climate change and modeling its causes and impacts of global climate change. The atmosphere and the ocean are getting warmer, extreme weather events are becoming more frequent, regional impacts from climate change are becoming more pronounced, freshwater is being added to the ocean by melting ice sheets, and the oceans are becoming more acidic from absorbing elevated atmospheric concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub>. Thus, the ability to understand, predict, mitigate, and adapt to the consequences of a changing environment is a monumental domestic and international challenge with enormous economic and societal implications. NOAA needs a robust research, exploration, observing, management, and education budget to more effectively fulfill its responsibilities in this area - which includes coordination among federal agencies, such as NASA and NSF, to understand and address the impacts of climate change and advance climate change education. In addition, NOAA's role in habitat restoration and conservation will be critical because of the role that coastal wetlands play in sequestering carbon and mitigating the most harmful aspects of sea level rise. Strong funding for these programs will be particularly important as the country begins to develop adaptation strategies for habitats and communities affected by climate change.

One of the major obstacles to understanding climate change is access to reliable, quality and consistent data streams. It is essential that NOAA be funded to maintain its fleet of data collection and research ships through maintenance, modernization and new construction. Earth observations from space are also essential for weather forecasting, hurricane warning, and management of agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The National Research Council reported earlier this year that the nation's "extraordinary foundation of global observations is a great risk." We are therefore very concerned with enhancing the ability of NOAA to work with NASA, the U.S. Navy, and other agencies to improve access to and analysis of earth observations from space in the very near-term and long-term. This would include the interagency support to the Office of Science and Technology Policy-led studies on options for optimizing the nation's satellite capacity to measure and monitor climate.

At the same time as we are dealing with climate change issues, we are also facing the challenge of severe weather events which have dramatic and substantial impacts on economic productivity at the national, state and local level. As such, there is a pressing need for expanded support for research on improved understanding and predicting of a wide range of deadly and costly weather events, such as hurricane intensification, tornado formation, winter storm development, droughts and heat waves, to name but a few. This will require added resources for NOAA's research laboratories and the National Weather Services' environmental prediction centers, and the concomitant upgrading of many ground- and upper-atmosphere-based observing systems (such as Unmanned Aerial Systems). In addition, enhanced efforts

are needed to better and more rapidly transition weather research developments into operations - into the hands of the operational forecasters who issue timely local forecasts, watches and warnings that consistently save lives and minimize property damage.

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 Fiscal Year 2009 is an important step towards fulfilling the recommendations of the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and would clearly demonstrate a commitment to improving the economic and ecological health our nation's oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes.

We are mindful that the Subcommittee will face many difficult choices as it moves to develop the Fiscal Year 2009 appropriation bill. Nevertheless, we hope the Subcommittee will recognize the unique contributions NOAA and its partners make to the nation's health and well being and provide the agency with a level of funding consistent with this recommendation.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

University Corporation for Atmospheric Research  
Consortium for Ocean Leadership  
Campaign for Environmental Literacy  
The Weather Coalition  
Shipbuilders Council of America  
West Marine, Inc.  
UCLA Institute of the Environment  
Sea Grant Association  
National Association of Marine Laboratories  
Reinsurance Association of America  
University of Oklahoma  
The Ocean Foundation  
Restore America's Estuaries  
American Rivers  
Fugro Pelagos, Inc  
Joint Ocean Commission Initiative  
National Weather Service Employees Organization  
South Carolina Sea Grant  
Michigan Sea Grant  
Florida Sea Grant  
Raytheon Company  
UNC Institute of Marine Sciences  
Savannah State University Marine Sciences  
Great Lakes WATER Institute University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
North Carolina Sea Grant Program  
Chesapeake Biological Laboratory, University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science  
Minnesota Sea Grant  
Pennsylvania Sea Grant  
Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium  
NC State University, Center for Marine Sciences and Technology  
Rhode Island Sea Grant  
University of Rhode Island Graduate School of Oceanography

University of Rhode Island  
Florida State University Coastal & Marine Laboratory  
Alaska SeaLife Center  
Center for Coastal Studies, Texas A&M University Corpus Christi  
Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies, Texas A&M University Corpus Christi  
New York Sea Grant  
Skidaway Institute of Oceanography  
Ohio Sea Grant College Program  
F. T. Stone Laboratory  
Center for Lake Erie Area Research  
National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges  
Scripps Institution of Oceanography  
Maine Sea Grant  
Puerto Rico Sea Grant  
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution  
University of Connecticut Marine Programs, Avery Point Campus Groton, Connecticut  
Maryland Sea Grant  
New Hampshire Sea Grant College Program  
Weather Bank, Inc.  
Commercial Weather Services Association  
Weather Risk Management Association  
University of Albany Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences  
University of Illinois School of Earth, Society, and Environment  
The Campbell Group, Inc.  
Hubbs-SeaWorld Research Institute  
DTN/Meteorlogix  
Pennsylvania Sea Grant  
American Rivers  
United Fishermen's Marketing Association, Inc.  
AccuWeather, Inc.  
Marine Conservation Biology Institute  
National Fisheries Institute  
National Marine Manufacturers Association  
University of Maryland  
Humboldt State University Marine Lab  
National Federation of Regional Associations  
The Ocean Project  
Woods Hole Sea Grant  
University of North Carolina Wilmington  
American Geological Institute  
The State University of New York  
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation  
American Red Cross  
National Wildlife Federation  
Oceana  
The Nature Conservancy  
Alliance for Earth Observations