

FRIENDS OF NOAA COALITION

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March 12, 2008

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

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

Dear Madam Chair and Ranking Member Shelby:

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 CO₂. 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