

June 26, 2006

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGARDING  
FY2007 APPROPRIATIONS FOR NOAA

We the undersigned urge all Members of the United States House of Representatives to support full funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and oppose any efforts to further cut funding for this critical federal agency.

Last August the Gulf Coast of the United States was battered by Hurricane Katrina – one of the deadliest and most devastating hurricanes in our Nation’s history. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter is that the nation’s weather enterprise – which includes the National Weather Service, NOAA, the private sector, and the academic sector -- produced forecasts and other information that set in motion actions that saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of our citizens.

Our Nation’s ability to provide life saving information to our citizens and the local, state, and federal officials responsible for public safety is the direct result of the sustained federal investment made in the ocean and atmospheric research and education programs, coastal management activities, fishery management, satellite programs, and related infrastructure throughout all of NOAA. Unfortunately, the House’s version of the FY 2007 Science, State, Justice and Commerce appropriations bill proposes to reduce NOAA by \$508 million below last year’s appropriated level, which is also \$289 million below the President’s request. The House Oceans Caucus recommended a funding level of \$4.5 billion as the level sufficient for NOAA to carry out its missions. The Friends of NOAA Coalition support the recommendation made by the House Oceans Caucus.

The House Subcommittee made some difficult budget choices within the constrained allocation it was provided. However, the reductions proposed for NOAA – coming on the heels of reductions in previous years – will seriously compromise NOAA’s ability to assist communities in mitigating the effects of coastal impacts and to deliver life-saving information as we wait for the “next Katrina”.

Successfully predicting the “next Katrina”, managing drought and wildfires in the West, dealing with coastal flooding and erosion, or preparing for the next blizzard to hit the Midwest or Northeast will undoubtedly depend on the health of the Nation’s weather enterprise. That, however, is not even half of the story. NOAA’s programs in ocean and atmospheric research, in coastal ocean and fisheries management, and in its satellite and related environmental monitoring and modeling technologies are undeniably linked together. They are an inseparable part of this Nation’s ability to deliver research results that apply in helping to build resilient communities, which ensures the long term health of our Nation, its citizens and its economy.

We – the members of the Friends of NOAA Coalition -- appreciate the budgetary constraints faced by the Congress but we also believe that NOAA is a vital investment in the security of this Nation. We call upon the Congress to recognize this need such that at the end of the day NOAA is provided with an appropriation sufficient to successfully carry out its mission over a sustained period of time.

Sincerely,

Alaska Oceans Program  
Alliance for Earth Observations  
American Rivers  
American Zoo and Aquarium Association  
Association of National Estuary Programs  
Campaign for Environmental Literacy  
Coastal States Organization  
Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education  
Environmental Defense  
Fish for the Future Foundation  
Furgo Pelagos, Inc.  
Joint Ocean Commission Initiative  
Marine Conservation Biology Institute  
Marine Technology Society  
National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges  
National Aquarium Institute  
National Environmental Trust  
National Estuarine Research Reserve Association  
National Federation of Regional Associations for Coastal and Ocean Observing  
National Fisheries Institute  
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation  
Oceana  
Raytheon  
Reinsurance Association of America  
Shipbuilders Council of America  
The National Association of Marine Laboratories  
The Nature Conservancy  
National Council for Science and the Environment  
The Ocean Conservancy  
The Ocean Foundation  
The Sea Grant Association  
The Weather Coalition  
University Corporation for Atmospheric Research  
UCLA Institute of the Environment  
United Fishermen's Marketing Association, Inc.  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Space Enterprise Council