

February 26, 2016

The Honorable Hal Rogers
Chairman, U.S. House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member, U.S. House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Thad Cochran
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Vice Chairwoman, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable John Culberson
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Mike Honda
Acting Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations

Re: Support funding for NOAA at or above the President's FY17 Request of \$5.8 billion.

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Cochran, Vice Chairwoman Mikulski, Chairman Culberson, Ranking Member Honda, and Chairman Shelby,

We write on behalf of millions of Americans who strongly support smart investment and robust funding in the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) ocean, coastal, and fisheries programs. We urge Congress to fund NOAA at or above the President's request of \$5.8 billion in FY17. In addition, we encourage balanced investments across NOAA's dual atmospheric and oceanic missions – Americans shouldn't have to choose between weather satellites and ocean and coastal resources that underpin and protect our coastal economies and communities. We simply need both.

NOAA's mission to understand, protect, restore, and manage our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes is vitally important not only to sustain these resources, but also to sustain our coastal economies. The *National Ocean Economics Program* has estimated that the U.S. ocean and coastal economy contributes \$343 billion annually to the nation's GDP through fisheries and seafood production, tourism, recreation, transportation, and construction. Additionally, over 2.9 million jobs in the U.S. depend on the ocean and coasts. **Adequate funding for NOAA is critically important to support a healthy and resilient ocean that can maintain and grow our coastal economies and communities.**

A healthy ocean is the foundation for thriving ecosystems that fishermen depend on. The seafood industry and recreational fisheries provide 1.7 million American jobs and contribute \$89 billion to the GDP. NOAA is tasked with protecting living marine resources and ending overfishing – both missions that will ensure that the ocean economy remains strong.

Resilience to man-made and natural disasters is also a critical mission area for NOAA. Coastal wetland buffer zones in the U.S. are estimated to provide \$23.2 billion per year in storm protection, and a single acre of wetland can store 1 to 1.5 million gallons of flood water or storm surge. NOAA works to build resilient communities that are more than just storm-ready, but are also prepared to face changing ocean conditions like acidification and sea level rise, changing economic conditions like emerging ocean industries, as well as major catastrophes like oil spills.

NOAA's ocean programs also support other federal agencies and missions. Research, modeling, and technology development improves our understanding of changes in ocean conditions – both in the short- and long-term. Ocean and coastal observations and monitoring provide critical data and information for severe storm tracking and weather forecasting systems, greatly reducing the cost of natural disaster preparation, evacuation, mitigation, and recovery. Additionally, ocean programs facilitate critical homeland security functions, including U.S. Navy operations and U.S. Coast Guard search and rescue.

The President's budget request seeks robust investments in ocean, coastal, and fishery programs to support NOAA's ocean mission. **Underfunding NOAA undercuts the nation's ocean and coastal communities and economies, and we urge Congress to fully fund NOAA at or above \$5.8 billion in FY17.**

Signed,

Alaska Wilderness League

American Association of Geographers

American Geophysical Union

American Rivers

Aquarium of the Pacific

Blue Frontier

Center for Biological Diversity

Center for Coastal Studies

Citizens Campaign for the Environment

Coastal States Organization

Conservation Council for Hawai'i

The Conservation Fund

Consortium for Ocean Leadership

Cooperative Development Institute

Environmental Defense Center

Friends of the Earth

Hands Across the Sand

IOOS Association

Management Association for Private Photogrammetric Surveyors (MAPPS)

Marine Conservation Institute

National Association of Marine Laboratories

National Estuarine Research Reserve Association

National Marine Sanctuary Foundation

National Society of Professional Surveyors (NSPS)

Natural Resources Defense Council

Nature Abounds

The Nature Conservancy

NY/NJ Baykeeper

Ocean Conservancy

Ocean Conservation Research

The Ocean Project

Oceana

Reef Relief

Restore America's Estuaries

Sea Grant Association

Surfrider Foundation

Wildlife Conservation Society

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