

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 13, 2006

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Science, State, Justice, and
Commerce Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Alan Mollohan
Ranking Member
Science, State, Justice, and
Commerce Subcommittee
House Appropriations Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Mollohan:

As Members of Congress with a great interest in our nation's oceans and coasts, we would like to draw your attention to the severe budget cuts proposed for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for FY 2007. We are deeply concerned that this austere oceans budget will decrease the important services NOAA provides to the nation and our constituents at home.

The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy (USCOP) highlighted the need for new and sustained investments in ocean and coastal programs to meet our current and future challenges. Failing to make these investments will jeopardize the economic and ecological benefits our nation receives from its oceans and coasts. Given NOAA's role as the federal government's lead agency for oceans and coasts, and the significant number of recommendations contained in the report that focus on programs and activities under the agency's jurisdiction, it is clear that a significant share of the Commission's proposed \$3.9 billion increase over current levels in ocean-related funding would be effectively used by NOAA to directly implement USCOP recommendations. Although we understand difficult decisions must be made in the limited budget available for FY 2007, we urge the Subcommittee to support the strongest possible funding for NOAA. As a first step to achieve the USCOP recommended funding levels, we request that the Subcommittee make significant progress toward increasing NOAA funding to \$4.5 billion in the very near term.

Programs facing crippling cuts-- The FY 2007 Administration budget request eliminates or significantly reduces funding for critical programs such as the Coastal Non-Point Pollution Program, ocean observing systems, oceans and human health research, marine debris removal, restoration of the Chesapeake Bay, cooperative fisheries research, and ocean education. We also draw your attention to programs which are struggling to adjust after enduring cuts of greater than 50 percent in FY 2006. These include NOAA's Undersea Research Program, marine protected areas, coral reef monitoring, and marine mammal research and management. Other critical NOAA programs with major shortfalls in FY 2006 include the National Sea Grant College Program, National Marine Sanctuaries Program, fisheries habitat restoration, and programs to address invasive species and bycatch. By improving science and education, enhancing living

marine resource management, and conserving habitats and ecosystems, these programs contribute to a healthier marine environment and deliver important benefits to our districts and the Nation. At a *minimum*, we respectfully request that funding for these programs be restored to FY 2005 enacted levels.

We also ask that the Subcommittee consider the following areas as priorities for NOAA's ocean and coastal-related funding in FY 2007, as highlighted by the Commission:

Coastal Resources--\$114 million increase over FY 2006 enacted

While coastal areas comprise less than one-quarter of the land area in the U.S., they are home to more than half of the total population and generate about half the total gross domestic product. As the USCOP reported, the popularity of these areas has unfortunate results, including increasing risks from coastal hazards, reducing and fragmenting fish and wildlife habitat, altering sediment and water flows, and contributing to coastal water pollution. NOAA's coastal programs provide important services for improved management and conservation of our coastal resources.

We suggest focusing on the following key coastal resource programs in FY 2007: Coastal Zone Management Program, Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program, National Estuarine Research Reserve System, National Marine Sanctuaries Program, Non-Point Source Pollution Grants Program, Community-based Restoration Program, and others. Through their partnership with NOAA and federal support, coastal states address the many challenges they face as more and more people move into our coastal watersheds.

Fisheries--\$35 million increase over FY 2006 enacted

The President's U.S. Ocean Action Plan and ongoing efforts to reauthorize the Magnuson-Stevens Act both underscore the imperative of achieving sustainable fisheries in US waters. NOAA is the primary federal agency charged with managing the sustainable use of our ocean's fisheries, and the funds needed to support both the economic and ecological importance of these resources must be sufficient to prevent permanent or long-term loss of ocean species. NOAA Fisheries needs adequate support for science to support management decisions and enforcement of fisheries laws. Additionally, funding for protection and restoration of fisheries habitat--such as the community-based approaches to restoration--is a requirement for sustainable management of the resource and for development of more effective, ecosystem-based approaches to management.

We suggest focusing on the following key fisheries programs in FY 2007: stock assessments, fishery observers, enforcement and surveillance, bycatch reduction, community-based restoration, and cooperative research. These critical programs provide the needed information for responsible management of our fisheries and the protection of ocean resources.

Observation, Research, and Education--\$226 million increase over FY 2006 enacted

The Commission's report emphasizes the importance of improving our understanding of ocean and coastal physical, biological, chemical and geological processes, as well as enhancing a stewardship ethic as part of a broader strategy to support ocean-related industries and coastal communities that make up a large part of the U.S. economy. The President's U.S. Ocean Action Plan recognizes these priorities and the Committee on Ocean Policy is moving forward with the

development of an ocean research strategy as well as promoting an ocean education initiative with NOAA playing a leadership role. The USCOP report addressed these issues with recommendations including: the doubling of the ocean and coast research budgets (+\$650 million); implementation of an integrated ocean observing system capable of analyzing long term trends regarding marine hazards, climate change, ocean health, and the sustainable use of ocean resources (+\$753 million), and increasing support for ocean-related education (+\$155 million). Congress can make progress towards meeting these goals by increasing support for NOAA's intramural and extramural climate and ocean research programs, the agency's education initiative, and accelerating the implementation of an Integrated Ocean Observing System.

As the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative noted in its U.S. Ocean Policy Report Card, the loss of funding for ocean-related programs is disappointing after such strong recommendations from the Commission on a much-needed national ocean agenda. Our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes require urgent attention. The health of our oceans depends on a *greater* financial commitment in the near term. Although we are facing an austere budget environment, the long-term prosperity of this nation is compromised unless we commit to a significant investment in core programs that will "protect, maintain, and restore the health of our ocean and coastal resources and the economic vitality they generate."

Thank you in advance for your support. For additional information, please contact: John Meyer (Gilchrest) at 5-5311, Letise Houser (Farr) at 5-2861, Andy Oliver (Saxton) 5-4765, Emily Knight (Allen) at 5-6116, Amy Leedecke (Weldon) 5-2011, Tracy Nagelbush (Inslee) at 5-6311, Eric Gordon (Pallone) at 5-4671, or Christine Pollack (Shaw) at 5-3026.

Sincerely,



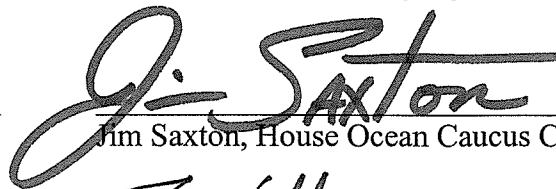
Wayne T. Gilchrest, Chairman
Resources Fisheries and Oceans Subcommittee;
House Oceans Caucus Co-chair



Frank Pallone, Jr., Ranking Member
Resources Fisheries and Oceans Subcommittee;
House Coastal Caucus Co-Chair



Sam Farr, House Ocean Caucus Co-Chair



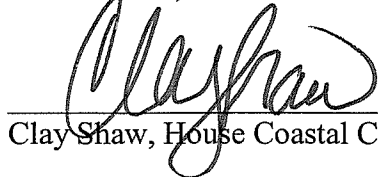
Jim Saxton, House Ocean Caucus Co-Chair



Curt Weldon, House Ocean Caucus Co-Chair



Tom Allen, House Ocean Caucus Co-Chair



Clay Shaw, House Coastal Caucus Co-Chair



Jay Inslee, House Ocean Caucus Co-Chair

Arle K. Kildee

Heena Au-Lektinen

David Price

Ken A. Wapner

Elijah E. Cummings

Paul. Delano

Lynn Woolsey

John B. King

Jennifer Nadler

Barack Obama

Alfred Hartung

John Oberstar

Edward J. Markey

Eric L. Enger

Richard Blumenthal

Jim Moran

Mary Lickerman

Carolyn B. Maloney

Richard E. Neal

Sander Levin

Gene Brown

Dana Rohrabacher

Chris Smith

Earl Blumenauer

John Clark
Elen Dauscher

Tommy Baldwin

Henry E. Braun, Jr.

Fritz Z.

Arson A. Davis

Rail M. Hjalva

Sam M. Pelt

Neil Abernethy

Dennis J. Kucinich

Paul Allen

Leis Capps

Betty McAllen

Jim McDuff

John B. Rasmussen

John B. Rasmussen

Wile Castle

Ron Kind

Michael E. Capuano

Ben Chandler

C.A. Duke Ruppertberger

Bob Lee

Michael W. Hondo

Rick Larsen

James Langerin

Ed Case

John Barrows

Wm. Lucy Clay

John A. LeBrier

~~Wm. Simmons~~

Robert Weyl

~~John Scho~~

John F. Tiery

Hayd Daggett

Alfred Lynch

Carl B. Hoff

John Lewis

Michael H. Mahan

Steve Brad

Jim McRann

Jane Hanner

Maddeline J. Borchallo

Nancy R. Johnson

Tom Lantos

Bob Filner

Wm. [unclear]

Dulene Horley

Mike McIntyre

~~James William H. Small~~

Bob DeLahou

Noon Deelis

John J. Smith

Hilda L. Adie

Ben Carson

Robert E. And