

February 22, 2012

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Ranking Member Fattah:

As supporters, stakeholders, employees, and partners of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), **Friends of NOAA strongly supports funding the agency at or above \$5.3 billion in FY13.**

NOAA is essential to America's economy, security, environment, and quality of life, and only a balanced approach to funding the agency will allow NOAA to realize the greatest economic and job creation benefits for the American people. From the 2010 Deepwater Horizon tragedy, where it took more than four months to accurately gauge the amount of oil spilled, to 2011's record-breaking string of 14, \$10 billion disasters, including floods, hurricanes, drought, tornadoes, wildfires, and blizzards, ongoing events provide ample evidence that Americans desperately need NOAA's fully integrated range of oceanic and atmospheric data, products, and services – and perhaps now more than ever before. With over half of Americans living along our coasts, insured coastal property worth some \$9 trillion, and weather- and climate- sensitive industries accounting for an overwhelming majority of US GDP, it is clear that investments in NOAA provide superior value to the nation by enabling businesses and government to better manage risk and optimize decision making.

If NOAA is to satisfy growing demands for its information and services, Congress must maintain adequate support to sustain states and coastal communities dependent on NOAA's effective ocean, coastal, and fisheries programs while also providing sufficient funding for the development of NOAA weather satellites that ensure the nation is prepared for future hazards and disasters. The agency's science, service, and stewardship missions are interdependent and connected in many ways, and it is critical that adequate funding be provided for NOAA to both collect and distribute data, and to validate and translate that data into products and services that Americans value. While we absolutely support continued investments in satellite programs that protect American lives and livelihoods, Friends of NOAA was deeply concerned with the House Appropriations Committee's FY12 approach to funding NOAA, and we strongly urge Congress to develop a stable, long-term vision for funding both satellite procurement and day-to-day operations across the entire agency. Only a balanced approach to funding will enable NOAA to continue delivering products that minimize loss of life and property damage, give businesses the information they need to create jobs, enable sound ocean resource management, and enhance capacities to understand and predict Earth's continually-evolving environment.

Investments in the following six areas are critical for NOAA to provide maximum benefits to the American people.

- Healthy Ocean and Coasts: Over 2.3 million jobs in coastal construction, fisheries, transportation, recreation, and other ocean-dependent industries rely on healthy ecosystems and contribute more than \$138 billion annually to the nation's GDP. A healthy ocean has drawn 53% of Americans to live on the coasts – 69 million workers in coastal counties contribute nearly \$8 trillion annually to GDP. *Funding cuts will risk NOAA's ability to ensure clean beaches, fishing, and sustainable economies in thousands of coastal communities; provide oceanographic data enabling safe maritime commerce; and implement the recommendations of the bipartisan US Commission on Ocean Policy.*
- National Weather Service Forecasts and Warnings: On the nation's highways and roads, adverse weather causes 7,400 deaths, over 700,000 injuries, 1.5 million crashes, and \$42 billion in economic losses each year. Roughly 70% of air traffic delays could be avoided with more accurate weather information, saving \$19 billion per year. Routine weather variations can affect up to 3.4% of GDP. *Funding below the FY12 level could result in the closure of NWS forecast offices, each of which safeguards an average population of 2.5 million people, and jeopardize the provision of 76 billion observations, 1.5 million forecasts, and 50,000 warnings each year.*
- Environmental Data to Manage Risk: Long-term environmental information affecting agriculture, marine and freshwater resources, flooding, forest management, coastal development, and wildland fire gives stakeholders critical tools to manage natural resources, reduce hazard risks, and limit federal liabilities. Drought forecasts are worth up to \$8 billion per year to the farming, transportation, tourism, and energy sectors, and a changing ocean affects coastal properties worth \$170 billion. *Funding cuts will jeopardize critical, high quality jobs and research capabilities and place at risk the development of new technologies and industries enabled by university and industry partnerships for long-term monitoring of environmental change.*
- Fisheries Management: Fishery stock assessments and data collection are essential to give managers the information they need to sustain fishing opportunities and jobs while preventing overfishing. Rebuilding all overfished stocks and harvesting them at maximum sustainable yield would generate \$31 billion in sales impacts and support up to 500,000 jobs. *Funding cuts will undermine recent gains in stock assessments and set back efforts to identify science-based catch limits that will maintain productive fisheries, secure fishing opportunities and jobs for present and future generations, and support the economic viability of coastal communities.*
- Research and Innovation: Cutting-edge science enables the development of innovative technologies, models, and observing systems that improve NOAA's long-term effectiveness and provide information critical to the basic functioning of a modern economy and safe society. Research establishes a credible foundation for businesses and government to understand, predict, and manage the risks of routine and severe weather, changing ocean ecosystems, and other environmental challenges. *Funding cuts will jeopardize improvements in ecosystem and environmental forecasting and modeling capabilities; integrated observing systems and the provision of basic environmental data; and the development of tools that help communities plan for extreme weather events and other disasters.*
- Geostationary and Polar Satellite Systems: Government at all levels, citizens, industry, and the military rely on NOAA satellites producing continuous data for weather forecasting, storm tracking, and long-term monitoring that protect lives and infrastructure. Polar and geostationary satellite observations can save up to \$1.6 billion per year through better storm warnings and savings for the maritime commerce, energy, aviation, boating, and agriculture sectors. *Cuts will increase the total cost to taxpayers and force the continued erosion of funding for other core NOAA programs. Funding below the recommended level may also delay launch dates, leaving Americans without the detailed severe weather information and warnings on which they rely every day.*

We again urge Congress to fund programs essential to protecting lives and livelihoods without suppressing effective ocean, coastal, and fisheries programs. Furthermore, we strongly encourage you to recognize the unique economic and job creation benefits of NOAA and its partners by funding the agency at or above \$5.3 billion in FY13. If the Friends of NOAA coalition can be of service or provide additional information, please contact Jeb Berman at jeb@nmsfocean.org or (202) 870-0387.

Sincerely,

**Friends
of NOAA**