



Ecological Society of America

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Testimony for the Record

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To the Senate Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

Regarding the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration FY 2021  
Budget

March 13, 2020

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The Ecological Society of America (ESA) is the nation's largest society of professional ecologists representing over 9,000 members across the country. **We write to urge you to support at least \$5.7 billion in funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for Fiscal Year 2021, including at least \$592 million for the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research and at least \$83 million for the National Sea Grant College Program.**

NOAA continues to serve as the nation's premier environmental intelligence community, supporting U.S. economic growth and job creation, enhancing public safety, and protecting and managing natural resources. We urge you to preserve funding for NOAA and to make strong investments in the agency and its research.

### **Strong Investments in NOAA Translate to Economic, Ecological, National Security, and Public Health Benefits**

Over half of the American population lives along our coasts. NOAA provides critical data and services that are essential to protecting these coastal communities, maintaining coastal economies, and managing our coastal resources. NOAA contributes a range of atmospheric and oceanic data, products, and services that benefit America's economy, quality of life, and scientific competitiveness:

- Timely and accurate National Weather Service forecasts and warnings that reduce vulnerability to extreme weather events such as Hurricanes Florence (2018), Harvey (2017), Irma (2017) and Maria (2017) and destructive tornadoes.

- Environmental monitoring, analysis, and data that reduce risks to people and property, including harmful algal bloom forecasts. Maintenance and stewardship of valuable coastal and marine resources, including sustainable management of fisheries
- Innovative geostationary and polar satellite systems that provide essential data and observations. Polar-orbiting satellites provide 85% of data that feed weather forecast models, forecasts that in turn provide over \$35 billion in economic benefit to U.S. households.
- Cutting-edge scientific research and development that has led to new technologies and scientific advances.
- Training the next generation of atmospheric and oceanic scientists. In 2018, NOAA trained more than 4,400 postsecondary students in related sciences through NOAA-funded programs.

#### **FY 2021 Funding for Research and Critical Offices**

Programs of importance to the ecological community are NOAA's **Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR)**, the **National Ocean Service (NOS)**, and the **National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS)**. These offices support intramural and extramural research critical to NOAA's mission of managing marine and coastal resources to meet the nation's environmental, economic, and social needs.

OAR provides the essential research foundation for NOAA's work. This office supports laboratories and programs across the U.S. and collaborates with external partners. NOAA collaborations include 16 NOAA-funded Cooperative Institutes consisting of 42 universities and research institutions across 23 states and the District of Columbia and 34 University-based Sea Grant College programs. ESA appreciates that Congress has rejected the administration's requests to eliminate the National Sea Grant College Program. In 2018, the Sea Grant program supported nearly 2,000 graduate and undergraduate students and provided \$624 million in economic benefits. OAR research contributes to accurate weather forecasts, enables communities to plan for and respond to climate events such as drought, wildfires and sea-level rise, and enhances the protection and management of the nation's coastal and ocean resources.

NOS and NMFS both play critical roles in the stewardship and management of our nation's natural resources. NOS works to preserve and enhance coastal resources, ecosystems, and economies.

NMFS is responsible for the stewardship of our ocean resources, providing the science necessary to sustain and revitalize our fisheries and marine habitats and ecosystems. ESA urges you to provide strong support for these NOAA offices.

### **Robust Support for NOAA Is Critical to Our Nation's Resilience and Scientific Leadership**

NOAA is an essential agency that plays a key role not only in understanding and predicting changes in climate, weather, and oceans, but also in protecting communities and ecosystems. We appreciate your past support for this critical agency, and we urge you, in the interest of ensuring our nation's continued and future resilience and scientific leadership, to continue this support and provide **\$5.7 billion for NOAA in FY 2021**. Thank you for your consideration of this request.