

Dear Senators and Representatives,

The undersigned groups and individuals represent voices from across the country and sectors of the economy that support robust funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) vital ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes programs. NOAA's grants, research, and programs are vital for coastal tourism, storm resilience, working waterfronts, and so much more. NOAA services help us understand and address climate change, tackle marine debris, manage our coastal and marine ecosystems, and grow a sustainable blue economy. Whether a community resides on our coast or further inland, we all rely on our ocean and on the resources that NOAA provides. We urge you to reject any proposed cuts and instead build on the investments in the future by increasing funding for NOAA.

NOAA's mission to understand, protect, restore, and manage our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes sustains our ocean, coastal environment and our economy. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, the marine economy – from fisheries and recreation to shipbuilding and national defense, on the coasts of our ocean and our Great Lakes – supported 2.4 million jobs and contributed \$387 billion to the nation's GDP in 2019, the last full year before the pandemic. That is more jobs than the crop production, telecommunication, and building construction sectors combined. Our nation's fisheries and seafood sector, one of the largest of the ocean economy with more than \$200 billion in annual sales, relies on information from NOAA to ensure that the industry is sustainably managed. As climate change alters the conditions in our ocean and on our coasts faster than ever before, NOAA must have the resources to provide the tools and guidance needed to incorporate this understanding into decision-making.

Coastal ecosystems are central to the blue economy. Estuaries generate 68% of our nation's commercially harvested seafood and are reliant on the wetlands that we often identify them with. These ecosystems also serve as coastal buffer zones, providing important storm protection benefits. The more abundant and healthier the nearby wetlands, the better they serve nearby communities. A 2021 study estimated that the coastal protection from storms offered by wetlands saved the United States \$200 billion annually in damage costs, not to mention hundreds of lives. Healthy and protected seagrass, marshes, and mangroves also provide a carbon sink, helping to absorb emissions and pollutants that exacerbate climate change. NOAA works to build healthy and resilient coasts that are more storm ready and prepared for threats like sea level rise and ocean acidification. As we face mounting challenges on our coasts, funding for NOAA has and will continue to be instrumental for our ocean and coastal communities.

Many of NOAA's successful programs provide resources to regions, states and communities to ensure inclusive, science-based decision making. NOAA provides leverage for hardworking people on the coast and on the water who rely on healthy coasts for their livelihoods. This includes people working through regional marine fishery management councils, using information from region-specific programs such as regional data portals, and relying on extramural funding that supports state agencies and universities, place-based conservation efforts in our estuaries and oceans, and more.

As you craft the FY24 spending bills, we ask that you consider the balance between NOAA's oceanic and atmospheric missions, and the nexus between the two. Americans should not have to choose between weather forecasts and ocean and coastal resources like healthy waters, coral reefs, fisheries and marine mammals. We need both. Each mission relies upon the other. NOAA's ocean programs support many other federal agencies and missions. For example, ocean observations and monitoring provide critical

information for severe storm tracking and weather forecasting. Ocean programs also facilitate homeland security and national defense functions, including U.S. Navy operations and U.S. Coast Guard search and rescue missions.

We appreciate the historic supplemental resources that Congress has provided to NOAA. These funds are needed to bolster our economy and ensure that our coasts are resilient to the impacts of climate change. It is absolutely critical, however, that supplemental resources do not replace the regular appropriations that the agency relies upon to maintain the many critical services that our nation depends on. Given the interconnected nature of NOAA's vital programs and services, oceanic and atmospheric, cuts could undermine not only the marine economy, but also have impacts across the government.

Our ability to achieve healthy ocean and coastal ecosystems and a sustainable blue economy is strengthened when NOAA and our coastal communities have the resources needed to be successful. We urge Congress to continue to support increased NOAA funding and avoid any budget cuts to the agency.

Sincerely,

Organizations

National

American Rivers
Association of Zoos and Aquariums
Azul
Coastal States Organization
Conservation International
Creation Justice Ministries
Endangered Species Coalition
Greenpeace USA
Healthy Ocean Coalition
Hispanic Access Foundation
Inland Ocean Coalition
Kids for Saving Earth
Marine Conservation Institute
National Aquarium
National Audubon Society
National Ocean Protection Coalition

National Parks Conservation Association

National Wildlife Federation

Natural Resources Defense Council

The Nature Conservancy

Ocean Defense Initiative

Ocean Conservancy

Oceana

Restore America's Estuaries

Surfrider Foundation

Union of Concerned Scientists

State and Regional

Illinois

Shedd Aquarium

Maine

Acadia Institute of Oceanography

DBA O'Dea Consulting

Friends of Casco Bay

Massachusetts

Marine Mammal Alliance Nantucket

Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

Michigan

Lopez-Wagner Strategies

New England

New England Aquarium

New Hampshire

Blue Ocean Society for Marine Conservation

Gundalow Company

Seacoast Science Center

New Jersey

Jenkinson's Aquarium

New York

Coastal Research & Education Society of Long Island, Inc.

Nassau Hiking & Outdoor Club

NY4WHALES

South Shore Audubon Society

Rhode Island

The Ocean Project

South Carolina

South Carolina Coastal Conservation League

Southeast

Gullah/Geechee Fishing Association

Gullah/Geechee Sea Island Coalition

Texas

Houston Wilderness

Turtle Island Restoration Network

U.S. Virgin Islands

Center for Marine and Environmental Studies, University of the Virgin Islands

Washington

Seattle Aquarium

Wisconsin

Milwaukee Riverkeeper

Individuals

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American Rivers

California

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