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, Acting 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
Jennifer Barrett
Owner, Island Connect Consulting LLC
Founder, Hawaii Nature Hui
Honolulu, HI

Richard Charter
Coastal Coordination Program
The Ocean Foundation

Paul R. Cooper
Vice President
CARIS USA

Michael P. De Luca
Senior Associate Director
Office of Research, NJAES
Rutgers University

Will McClintock, Ph.D.
Marine Science Institute
University of California Santa Barbara
Santa Barbara, CA

Dr. David Norton
Vice President for Research
University of Florida

Mitchell A. Roffer (Ph.D.)
President, Roffer's Ocean Fishing Forecasting Service, Inc.
West Melbourne, FL

Y. Peter Sheng, Ph.D.
Research Professor
Coastal and Oceanographic Engineering Program
University of Florida

Dr. Alina M. Szmant
Research Professor of Marine Science
Center for Marine Science
University of North Carolina Wilmington
Wilmington, NC

Michael C. Tuttle, Ph.D., RPA
Manager Marine Services Division
Gray & Pape, Inc.
Providence, RI

Professor Dawn J. Wright
Oregon State University (Courtesy)