Dear Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Leahy, and Ranking Member Granger:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations and our members, we would like to thank you for moving forward with negotiations for full-year appropriations bills. Full year appropriations bills are essential in providing certainty among federal agencies and ensuring efficient agency operations. As you consider final Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 spending bills, we urge you to continue to prioritize investments in ocean, coastal, and fisheries programs by providing robust funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and rejecting cuts to the agency, including the elimination of appropriations to the National Oceanographic Partnership Program (NOPP).

NOAA’s mission to understand, protect, restore, and manage our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes is vitally important to sustain these resources and our economy – this is even more critical as the economy continues to strain under the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic. The U.S. ocean and coastal economy contributes $359 billion annually to the nation’s GDP and supports 3 million jobs. NOAA funding is necessary to support a healthy and resilient ocean that can maintain and grow our coastal economies and communities.

We are encouraged to see increases to key NOAA programs proposed in both the Senate and the House bills, including increases to Regional Ocean Partnerships, the National Sea Grant College Program, the Marine Debris Program, Ocean Acidification Program, Regional Councils and Fishery Commissions, IOOS Regional Observations, Coastal Management Grants and more. While negotiating final appropriations for the agency, we ask that you maintain the increases that have been proposed and ensure that there are no cuts to programs as compared to FY 2020 funding levels.

While there were increases for programs in both the Senate and the House bills, we were disappointed to see that the Senate-introduced bill eliminated appropriations to NOAA for the NOPP. This is a vital program that facilitates partnerships between federal agencies, academia, industry, and other members of the ocean community to advance ocean science research and
education. The NOPP has been responsible for over 200 projects that address economic development, national security, science education, and environmental sustainability through large-scale collaborations in ocean research. Providing funding to NOAA for NOPP would facilitate the continued success of the program through projects promoting national goals (national security, economic prosperity, and quality of life) related to ocean knowledge, which will also help the agency meet its mission. Though we recognize the budgetary constraints this year, as you move forward with negotiations, we urge you to reject the elimination of appropriations to NOAA for the NOPP and maintain funding at the FY 2020 level of $5 million, which is the amount in the House-passed funding proposal.

In this unprecedented year, it is even more important that the agency charged with promoting the blue economy and safeguarding our ocean, coasts and Great Lakes has the resources and certainty to carry forward its critical work. We urge you to improve investments in our ocean and coastal communities by providing robust funding for NOAA’s programs and rejecting the elimination of the NOPP.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ocean Conservancy
American Shore & Beach Preservation Association
Animal Welfare Institute
Conservation Law Foundation
Consortium for Ocean Leadership
Climate Law & Policy Project
GreenLatinos
IOOS Association
Joint Ocean Commission Initiative
Kids for Saving Earth
Marine Conservation Institute
National Association of Marine Laboratories
National Audubon Society
National Estuarine Research Reserve Association
National Ocean Protection Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
Sierra Club
Surfrider Foundation
Union of Concerned Scientists
Whale and Dolphin Conservation
Wild Salmon Center

CC:
Majority Leader Mitch McConnell; Minority Leader Chuck Schumer; Speaker Nancy Pelosi; Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy; Senator Jerry Moran; Senator Jeanne Shaheen; Representative Jose Serrano; Representative Robert Aderholt