



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON **SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY**

Opening Statement

**Chair Lizzie Fletcher (D-TX)
of the Subcommittee on Environment**

Subcommittee on Environment:
A Review of the NOAA Fiscal Year 2020 Budget Request
April 30, 2019

Good morning. I would like to welcome Dr. Neil Jacobs to the Committee and thank him for coming to testify today on the President's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2020 for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA.

NOAA's mission is to "understand and predict changes in climate, weather, oceans, and coasts, to share that knowledge and information with others, and to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources." NOAA strives to meet this mission through its six line offices that collect environmental observations through satellites and specialized marine vessels and aircraft, analyze, store and disseminate this data, provide weather forecasts and climate predictions, protect our coastal and marine resources, and conduct cutting-edge scientific research.

Many Americans utilize NOAA's publicly available data on a daily basis. That is why NOAA's budget request for fiscal year 2020 of \$4.5 billion—an almost 18% decrease from the \$5.4 billion provided in the fiscal year 2019 enacted budget—is deeply alarming. Every line office within NOAA received net decreases to their top line budgets, with significant cuts to both NOAA research programs and extramural research grants.

Many of our constituents are already dealing with impacts of climate change, such as sea level rise, heavy rainfall, and rising temperatures in both our oceans and atmosphere. The National Climate Assessment, a congressionally mandated report published by the U.S. Global Change Research Program, describes these and other risks and impacts arising from climate change across the U.S., in addition to examining the latest climate science. The USGCRP is supported by funding contributions from the federal member agencies.

The increased frequency of severe weather events that are impacting every part of the country is also described in the National Climate Assessment. We must continue to support efforts to enhance both our weather forecasting and climate prediction capabilities, which are based on long-term records of environmental observation. Across-the-board funding cuts endanger NOAA's ability to continue to collect, analyze, store, and disseminate this critical data. In order to sustain this data stream, we must provide robust and consistent funding for data collected by in-situ and remote-sensing platforms.

The U.S. has been the leader in weather forecasting and climate prediction not only because of our cutting-edge weather models, but also our uninterrupted record of environmental observations and measurements that span decades, which feed into our models and help provide better, more accurate forecasts. Additionally, NOAA has seen large improvements in forecasts by focusing on the transition of weather research conducted at line offices such as the Office for Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, to operations at the National Weather Service.

The draconian cuts of over 40% to the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, or OAR (Oh-A-R), would include the complete elimination of NOAA's portion of funding for the National Climate Assessment. These funding cuts would also significantly reduce both intramural and extramural research, and slow down the critical research to operations transition.

Stakeholders in decision-making roles at the state and local levels, including emergency managers, utilize many of the products and services developed across NOAA. When Hurricane Harvey hit my district in 2017, the National Hurricane Center provided direct support to on-the-ground emergency managers and other decision-makers in Houston and across Texas and Louisiana. The National Weather Service also issued its first-ever storm surge watches and warnings during Harvey. These storm surge watches and warnings had been under development over the past several years. It is important to note that there were no storm-surge related deaths from Hurricane Harvey, a category 4 hurricane. The proposed cuts in this budget to the National Weather Service could negatively impact these existing successful interactions with local stakeholders.

The benefits of a well-funded NOAA are clear, which is why I am concerned that the widespread cuts proposed in this budget will impact NOAA's ability to meet its mission. Consistent and reliable funding is required to make significant improvements to our weather and climate models, which can be decades in the making, and ensure continuous collection of environmental observations.

I am glad to know that Congress will have the final say on the budgets of federal agencies so that we can ensure that NOAA can continue to meet its critical mission by providing robust funding to an Agency that touches the lives of every American on a daily basis. I hope today's discussion will shed some light on how this budget will help support NOAA's long term priorities.

I look forward to a productive discussion with Dr. Jacobs to better understand the Administration's justification for its proposed FY 2020 budget for NOAA.

Thank you.