



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

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ)

Subcommittee on Environment Hearing:
Advancing Earth System Science and Stewardship at NOAA
September 23, 2021

Good morning, and welcome to today's Environment Subcommittee hearing to discuss the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Earth System Science and Stewardship priorities.

I'd like to thank Ranking Member Bice for her bipartisan partnership at this hearing as well as on recent legislation we've partnered together on, including the NOAA Weather Radio Modernization Act, which would expand and modernize a key tool in providing warnings on impending weather emergencies, as well as the VET RENT Act, which I'll be introducing soon, to ensure veterans who were housed in barracks-style housing have parity when competing for rental housing as civilians.

I would like to welcome NOAA Administrator Dr. Richard Spinrad to the Committee and thank him for being here to testify about the vital work of this agency.

The climate crisis, and its very real impacts that we are facing today, underscores the importance of NOAA's mission to *QUOTE* "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." Extreme weather events and billion-dollar disasters are on the rise, and NOAA's environmental research, services, and stewardship activities are critical to saving lives and safeguarding our economy.

Earlier this month, Hurricane Ida, which made landfall over a thousand miles away, caused historic and deadly levels of rainfall and flooding across my district and region in New Jersey. New Jerseyans are unfortunately no strangers to flooding, but an event of this magnitude shows us why we need to invest in resilience, and not just recovery. Climate change is causing storms like Ida to rapidly intensify and suck up more moisture, increasing flood risk. Supporting the work of NOAA's dedicated researchers and forecasters will help improve lead times for extreme weather and evacuation alerts and to better understand how climate change impacts extreme events like Ida.

Many Americans utilize NOAA's data, products, and services on a daily basis, often without even realizing it. The most obvious examples are the weather apps on our phones. In addition, brave firefighters rely on meteorological data to predict where the latest catastrophic inferno will spread. Farmers across the country use products like the U.S. Drought Monitor to be strategic about their irrigation and crop decisions. Local officials utilize NOAA's real-time ocean data to know when to issue a harmful algae bloom warning and close beaches. NOAA's Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments Program provides crucial climate products and tools for officials to make informed infrastructure planning decisions that will withstand a changing climate. And so much more.

NOAA is only able to provide this, and many more types of useful information, because of its extensive network of Earth systems observations. These observational systems collect data from ships, aircraft, satellites, radar, and more. NOAA's scientists then process and analyze the data to provide forecasts and predictions in an accessible manner for all of us to benefit from.

That is why my colleagues and I on the Science Committee must continue to support NOAA's work. That means understanding what the agency needs to expand their current science and stewardship activities for future needs. It means providing the necessary high performance computing capabilities to both conduct research and run Earth systems models. It also means supporting NOAA's workforce by increasing both hiring and diversity.

And last, but most certainly not least, it means upholding scientific integrity. NOAA and the scientific enterprise overall took a beating over the last several years when it came to upholding scientific integrity. We must work collectively to restore America's faith in science and our invaluable federal scientists.

I am pleased that the Biden Administration and Congress have taken steps to provide major investments for NOAA in fiscal year 2022 and beyond. Passing these investments into law will be critical to advancing the agency's life-saving work and help Americans across the country.

I am looking forward to hearing Administrator Spinrad's vision for advancing cutting edge science and how we, in Congress, can support the agency's mission in tackling the grand challenges we face today and will face in the future.