

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 15, 2026

Mr. Brian Stone
Chief of Staff, Performing the Duties of the Director
National Science Foundation
401 Dulany Street
Alexandria, VA 22314

Dear Mr. Stone,

We write to you regarding the report that the National Science Foundation (NSF) is illegally dismantling the Ocean Observatories Initiative (OOI). On May 21, 2026, NSF quietly posted to its website its intent to remove four of the five currently operating arrays within the project.¹ There was no process, no press, and no notification to Congress until the *New York Times* picked it up more than a week later.² While NSF has referred to this action as “descoping,” eliminating 80 percent of a project – represented by many hundreds of instruments spread across the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans – amounts to nothing less than dismantling. This is a startling use of resources in a resource-strapped time for the agency, and it is not difficult to draw a line from this move to the broader Administration’s anti-science, climate-denialist modus operandi. We demand that you cease this expensive, destructive, and – crucially – illegal action at once.

The OOI has been operating for 10 years and was designed to operate for up to 30 years.³ The 900 instruments are distributed far and wide, collecting real-time observations and openly sharing them with researchers around the world – nearly one billion data requests have been fulfilled. OOI observations provide crucial information to coastal communities, improving weather forecasts and ocean models. The real-time OOI observations on ocean currents and upwelling inform fishery management, supporting \$319 billion in annual sales and 2.1 million jobs in the United States.⁴ In addition, Tribes use OOI data to monitor and protect Tribal resources.

Unfortunately for these researchers, coastal managers, Tribes, and all Americans who paid for this system with their tax dollars and benefit from the insights it provides into our oceans, the OOI’s data is inconvenient for an Administration whose agenda to close our eyes to climate change comes above all else. Your spokesperson essentially said as much to the *New York Times* – this decision “aligns with NSF’s wider strategy to have a nimbler approach to prioritizing support for evolving scientific priorities.” We are over a year into NSF using this Administration’s “priorities” to justify pulling the rug out from under meritorious research that has passed rigorous review processes led by scientific experts. The

¹ Announcement on NSF OOI Descoping, accessed here: <https://oceanobservatories.org/2026/05/announcement-on-ooi-descoping/>

² Eric Niiler, “Trump Administration to Dismantle Ocean Monitoring System,” *The New York Times*, June 1, 2026, accessed here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/06/01/climate/ocean-observatories-initiative.html?smid=nytcore-ios-share>

³ “The Vision,” National Science Foundation, Ocean Observatories Initiative, accessed here on June 2, 2026: <https://oceanobservatories.org/the-vision/>.

⁴ Fisheries Economics of the United States, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, accessed here on June 5, 2026: <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/sustainable-fisheries/fisheries-economics-united-states>.

assertion that this is an example of NSF being “nimble” is particularly absurd. This decision means that instead of paying for the valuable insights that can be gleaned from the 10-years-and-counting continuous monitoring, taxpayers are now paying for research vessels to span the ocean dredging up hundreds of pieces of instrumentation. This is pathetic. In a time of strained resources, the NSF is wasting time and money to destroy its own scientific infrastructure.

In a message to Congress,⁵ NSF has further pointed to a report published by the National Academies⁶ to justify dismantling the project. But in plain English for all to read, the Academies did not call for ending OOI. Specifically, they recommended that “The National Science Foundation’s Division of Ocean Sciences (OCE) should conduct a revisioning and restructuring exercise for the future of the Ocean Observatories Initiative (OOI).” And further, that the analysis should include “an analysis of the scientific contributions of each of the OOI arrays.” NSF has published no such analysis, nor is there any evidence that NSF engaged any part of the stakeholder community in such an analysis. This is not a process that “prioritizes support for evolving scientific priorities.” It is arguably not a process at all; it is a dictate.

This decision lets climate denialists rejoice that there will be less evidence to contradict their harebrained conspiracy theories. But they will not be the only ones celebrating. As the United States retreats from continuous ocean monitoring to provide fodder for internecine political squabbles, China advances.⁷ This Administration is more than happy to claim NSF is a national security agency when it supports their anti-union initiatives.⁸ Funny enough, this designation seems to vanish when it comes to the NSF activities that do bolster our national security and situational awareness. If this Administration has its way, then the United States – as well as international partners who relied on OOI data – will be dependent on China for ocean data.

Unfortunately for the President, NSF’s ability to tear itself apart at his whim is limited by the law. The fiscal year 2026 Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations law requires that NSF notify the House and Senate Appropriations Committees “at least 30 days in advance of any planned divestment through transfer, decommissioning, termination, or deconstruction of any NSF-owned facilities or any NSF capital assets (including land, structures, and equipment) valued greater than \$2,500,000.” Furthermore, the Commerce, Justice, Science joint explanatory statement affirms Congress’s support of NSF’s research and development centers and scientific facilities. To the best of our knowledge, no formal notification of a deconstruction has been transmitted.⁹ Additionally, I need not remind you that report language is not optional. You must cease this illegal decommissioning of the OOI immediately.

Pursuant to Rule X of the House of Representatives, the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology “shall review and study on a continuing basis laws, programs, and Government activities relating to nonmilitary research and development.”¹⁰ The Committee possesses jurisdiction over the National

⁵ Document on file.

⁶ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2025. *Forecasting the Ocean: The 2025–2035 Decade of Ocean Science*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/27846>.

⁷ Pete McKenzie, “China is mapping the ocean floor as it prepares for submarine warfare with the U.S.,” *Reuters*, March 24, 2026, accessed here: <https://www.reuters.com/investigations/china-is-mapping-ocean-floor-it-prepares-submarine-warfare-with-us-2026-03-24/>.

⁸ “Fact Sheet: President Donald J. Trump Exempts Agencies with National Security Missions from Federal Collective Bargaining Requirements,” The White House, March 27, 2025, accessed here: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/03/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-exempts-agencies-with-national-security-missions-from-federal-collective-bargaining-requirements/>.

⁹ Document on file.

¹⁰ [119 First Session House Rules](#).

Science Foundation.¹¹ If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Sara Palasits or Albert Hinman with the Science Committee's Minority staff at (202) 225-6375 or Rachel Gentile with the Natural Resources Committee's Minority staff at (202)-225-6065. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



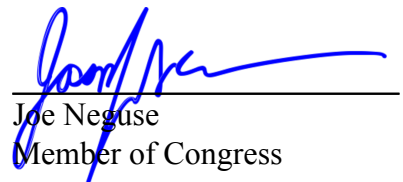
Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member
Committee on Science,
Space, and Technology



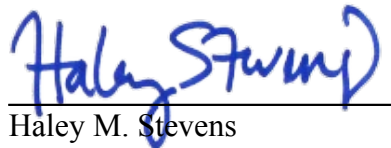
Jared Huffman
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee
on Natural Resources



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



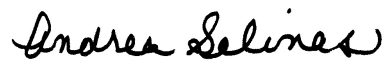
Joe Neguse
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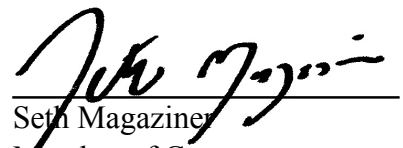
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Val Hoyle
Member of Congress





Valerie P. Foushee
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Seth Magaziner
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¹¹ *Id.*

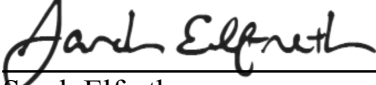

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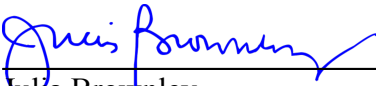

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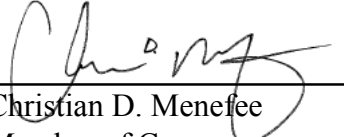

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