

OPENING STATEMENT
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of the Subcommittee on Environment

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Subcommittee on Environment
“Leading the Way: Examining Advances in Environmental Technologies”
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to our witnesses for being here today.

Federal investment and policies can incentivize and drive the development of new, innovative technologies, and these technologies can help us find creative solutions to our most troubling problems. We are fortunate to have with us today three witnesses who have all worked with NOAA to bring their technologies to the public. This hearing gives us the opportunity to discuss the importance of federal engagement with non-federal partners.

One of the great things about new technology is that even small innovations can have a large and meaningful effect on our lives. Dr. Hales’ “Burke-o-Lator” is an excellent example of this. The “Burke-o-Lator” is an autonomous analyzer the size of a piece of carry-on luggage that has helped shellfish growers across the Pacific Northwest determine the best time to grow larvae. The “Burke-o-Lator” can determine the ocean’s ability to form the calcium carbonates needed for shell formation, and it can be installed on ships. The “Burke-o-Lator” is available commercially, and it’s allowed shellfish growers to take control of their livelihoods by putting the tools they need to be successful at their fingertips. None of this would have been possible without the federal research grants that provided the initial funding.”

Although the range of technologies we are discussing in today’s hearing is narrowly focused on oceanic and atmospheric observations, it is important to note that both the EPA and NOAA cover a broad range of environmental monitoring and observations that would be negatively affected by the President’s proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2018.

The President’s proposed budget would cut EPA’s state and local air quality management grants by 30 percent, which would have a devastating effect on the ability of many state and local agencies to adequately maintain their ambient air quality monitoring programs. This could lead to negative public health outcomes for many residents. Similarly, proposed cuts to numerous NOAA grant programs would severely limit the ability of the Agency to meet its mission on environmental monitoring and observations.

Although I am looking forward to today’s discussion about new technologies, we must remember that fundamental science at federal agencies, such as the EPA and NOAA, are on the chopping block under this Administration. As we listen to our witnesses, let’s acknowledge that federal agencies play an integral role in funding and accelerating the development of new technology to fit specific needs of niche markets or entire sectors.

This is the Science Committee, and I want to emphasize how critical it is for Congress to continue to fund basic science at both NOAA and the EPA. The President’s Budget proposes

cuts to fundamental scientific research funding at EPA's Office of Research and Development by almost 50 percent, and NOAA's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research is slated to be cut by 32 percent. These numbers are unacceptable and demonstrate that this Administration lacks understanding or concern about the importance of scientific research in promoting public health and protecting the environment and property.

I would also like to draw attention to the troubling fact that there have been no nominations to fill any appointed positions at NOAA since the beginning of this Administration. This vacuum of leadership has left the agency, well, rudderless, with line offices neglected. The mission of NOAA's line offices are simply too important, and the stakes too high, for us to wait any longer. Our committee must be the advocates for NOAA's role in our economy, and for the safety of our citizens who rely on their research and data. We need to have discussions about the state of the science at NOAA and EPA and its leadership, and I hope that we are able to have a frank and open conversation about the future of both agencies soon.

I look forward to the discussion with our witnesses today about the exciting technologies that they are working on, as well as the integral role that federal investments play in promoting innovation within the realm of environmental monitoring in both the private sector and academia. With that I yield back the balance of my time.