

OPENING STATEMENT
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June 22, 2011
Hearing
Examining NOAA's Climate Service Proposal
U.S. House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Thank you, Chairman Hall. I appreciate you holding this hearing today to discuss the climate science and services of NOAA and their efforts to create a Climate Service line office within the agency. We will also discuss the range of services and products NOAA already provides for countless numbers of users, including the U.S. Navy who is with us today.

This Committee has heard as much as, if not more than, any other Committee on the subject of climate change. The scientific evidence is strong and, in my opinion, incontrovertible. Unfortunately, despite years of hearings and support for climate science through both Republican and Democratic Administrations and Majorities, it is clear that Congress has taken a step backwards and allowed fear, doubt, or ignorance to undo the progress we were beginning to make on climate change science. Instead of denying the existence of climate change, today we should be asking ourselves what we can do to help Americans adapt to the impacts of a changing climate.

These impacts will extend far beyond mere inconvenience. For anyone that is more concerned about financial costs of taking action to prevent and adapt to climate change, I ask you to consider the economic impacts such as prolonged droughts and heat waves, increased flooding, more intense storms, species extinction and invasive species, sea level rise, melting polar ice caps, and mass migration, just to name a few.

From the tornados in the South, drought and fires in the West, and flooding in the Midwest, regardless of their relation to climate change, we have seen in recent months how even isolated instances of these phenomena can devastate economies. That said; why would we not want to give people the tools and information needed to anticipate what is to come?

Many sectors of our society –farmers; natural resource managers; coastal resource managers; State and local government officials; the transportation sector; and water, utility , and energy companies, just to name a few - all benefit from NOAA's ability to predict the intensity and duration of climatic events. On the national, regional and local scale, these services and products will make it easier for decision makers and managers to prepare and develop plans to respond to the various weather and climate events.

As the demand for more climate information has grown, so has the need for our scientists to better understand and explain the various climate cycles and patterns. This is not a new need. In fact, in the 107th Congress, this Committee passed legislation authored by Mr. Hall to expand

climate services by authorizing the National Integrated Drought Information Service or NIDIS. It was a common sense measure, unburdened by today's political rhetoric on climate change.

I hope that this hearing is not going to be another discussion about whether NOAA, in some underhanded way, has already established a Climate Service office without the consultation and approval of Congress. Dr. Lubchenco has stated several times, both verbally in this Committee and in letters, that NOAA has not established or implemented a Climate Service line office. To rehash that discussion again today would be a waste of our time and taxpayer dollars when we should be working to determine how NOAA can best serve the public's need for these services. It is time to move forward.

This Committee has been discussing the creation of a Climate Service for a few years now, weighing the pros and cons of the different options for structuring the program. And, there has been no shortage of input. In addition to the relevant agencies, many stakeholders have testified before this Committee and written letters, and numerous articles have been published about the growing need for, and the key elements of, an organized climate service.

We must ensure that the services are aligned in a way that there is robust interagency coordination, and that the federal government is positioned to support the different regions and the State, local, and tribal governments in their efforts. We must also make sure we continue to strengthen NOAA's climate science capabilities while also delivering timely and needed services. I expect that we will hear a commitment and a plan from NOAA for how to ensure that both the research and the services are maintained, and that other crucial missions of the agency are not compromised.

We may not yet agree on the mechanics, scope, and scale of a program, but I believe we can all see the benefit of providing the individuals, communities, governments, and businesses in our districts with the type of reliable long-term climate information and services that will reduce our vulnerability to weather and climate events. I would hate to look back and regard the years we have spent discussing this as a lost opportunity to do something good for the next generation.

Thank you, Chairman Hall.