

Opening Statement

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Committee on Science, Space, & Technology
Subcommittee on Environment

*“An Overview of the Budget Proposal for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
for Fiscal Year 2017”*

March 16, 2016

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for holding this afternoon’s hearing. Welcome back Dr. Sullivan, and thank you for your service and leadership at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. I’m looking forward to today’s discussion about the President’s fiscal year 2017 budget request and NOAA’s priorities in the coming year.

NOAA is a critically important agency tasked with helping our communities, economy, and ecosystems remain healthy and resilient in the face of an ever-shifting environment. NOAA conducts state-of-the-art research to understand and predict changes in weather and the climate, as well as in the oceans and our coasts. This science is used to create products and services that inform decision-making by a diverse set of stakeholders, including emergency managers, farmers, pilots, and utility operators.

NOAA is an agency that has a direct effect on the livelihood of all of our constituents. In Oregon, NOAA helps coastal residents decide when it’s safe to go fishing and if the shellfish they are harvesting or buying for dinner are free from harmful algal blooms. Their work supports the wine industry in Yamhill County as they grow grapes that become Oregon’s world-famous pinot noir. And NOAA assists people in Oregon, and across the country, in planning for and responding to extreme weather events and natural hazards like heavy precipitation, drought, earthquakes, and tsunamis.

Overall, I am pleased that the President’s budget request recognizes the importance of NOAA to the economic security of our nation. The budget request also recognizes that NOAA’s critical mission of “science, service, and stewardship” can only be accomplished through a robust observational infrastructure. I’m interested in learning more today about the agency’s progress in developing and launching the next generation of environmental satellites, its efforts to

recapitalize an aging fleet of survey vessels, and NOAA's plans to speed the transition of cutting edge-research into operational use.

Earlier this month, Oregon became the first state to enact legislation that would eliminate the use of coal-fired power. The law requires that Oregon accomplish this goal by 2035 and that the State double its renewable energy production by 2040. Oregonians know that climate change is the biggest environmental challenge of our time and they want to lead the way as the nation and world starts to shift to cleaner energy sources.

So I am especially pleased that the proposed budget recognizes the growing demand for climate data, especially at the regional level. The budget seeks to address this need for regional information and tools by expanding the Regional Integrated Sciences and Assessments program into an additional region and by serving new communities in regions where the program already exists.

The proposed budget also seeks to improve our understanding of ocean acidification and the effect ocean health and climate variability can have specifically on fish stocks, but also on our economy at large.

Many people fish for a living in Oregon and Washington, and this is something that is causing serious concern. In fact, regional fishery managers are considering a closure of Oregon and Washington ocean salmon fisheries north of Cape Falcon. The warming of the ocean has been devastating for salmon runs, the predictions for coho returns this year is half of last year's forecast.

This is a problem for our ocean economy. According to the World Bank, more than 350 million jobs globally are tied directly to our oceans. Fisheries alone represent \$108 billion dollars per year in trade. In the United States, 58 percent of the nation's gross domestic product or \$8.3 trillion dollars is generated by the counties that are adjacent to our oceans and Great Lakes.

Although I am generally pleased with the President's budget request for NOAA, I will mention a specific concern. The Cascadia Subduction Zone sits off the coast of Oregon. It is not a matter

of if, but when another earthquake occurs on this fault-- triggering a massive tsunami with potentially catastrophic results.

A researcher from Oregon State University, Dr. Chris Goldfinger, was quoted stating that, “the gap between what we know and what we should do about it is getting bigger and bigger, and the action really needs to turn to responding. Otherwise, we’re going to be hammered.”

Therefore, I trust you will understand my concern with the proposed reduction of the education and awareness grants through the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program. These grants are designed to help communicate threats to vulnerable communities and assist in the development of response strategies. We can’t neglect this critical last step.

Mr. Chairman, thank you, again for holding this hearing. I look forward to working with you and our colleagues to ensure that NOAA has the resources it needs to fulfill its missions of protecting lives and property, and to getting some important legislation like the reauthorization of the Tsunami Warning, Education, and Research Act and the Weather Research and Forecasting Innovation Act signed into law. I yield back the balance of my time.