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To the Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States House of Representatives

Regarding Funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the National Science Foundation, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration
May 2025

On behalf of the National Association of Marine Laboratories (NAML), I am writing in support of increasing FY 2026 funding levels to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). **As you draft the Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill, NAML respectfully requests no less than $7.5 billion for NOAA and $16.7 billion for NSF.** The oversight and support of these agencies, including specific programs identified below, are essential to the health and future of our nation's marine and coastal resources and the economies that depend upon them.

Coastal counties in the United States are home to 40 percent of the population, and if they were their own country, their GDP would rank third in the world, following only the United States and China. Not only is the marine and Great Lakes economy an important part of our national economy, but it also often outperforms the national economy. For example, in 2021, America's marine economy saw a 7.4 percent growth in its contribution to the GDP, while the national economy grew by only 5.9 percent.

The role of the ocean and Great Lakes extends far beyond our economy. It is critical to our nation's prosperity and security, impacting everything from global commerce and national defense to food security, resilient ecosystems, and the economic health of coastal and Great Lakes communities. To ensure our security in these areas, the United States must invest in and support agencies and programs that both help us better understand and observe our changing ocean. These agencies will also need to ensure that we will have a trained workforce that enables us to maintain our international competitiveness.

NAML is a network of 104 place-based marine and Great Lakes laboratories across the nation with a mission to promote excellence in research, education, and public outreach in the marine and freshwater sciences. NAML lab locations can be viewed here. NAML also seeks to provide a forum for the resolution of challenges common to nonprofit marine laboratories in the United States and to inform the wise use and conservation of marine and coastal resources.

NAML respectfully requests the committee continue to fund these critical programs at no less than the levels that were appropriated in recent years, as is provided below for extramural ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes research, conservation, observing, and education programs. NAML asks the committee to intervene and stop sudden cancellations of ongoing research at NOAA, NSF, and NASA, and sudden, unplanned

reductions in indirect costs for grants and cooperative agreements. At the very least, the proposed indirect cost rates should be delayed giving researchers and institutions time to adjust. NAML also requests the committee keep NOAA intact and continue to fund critical programs within the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research.

NOAA

NOAA plays a key role in our nation's security, stability, and prosperity. NAML labs operate on the frontline of a constantly changing environment. Thus, we understand more than most how much our nation depends on healthy marine and freshwater resources, how weather and climate hazards challenge the resilience of coastal communities, and how research and education enterprises provide the knowledge and training for decision-makers in our coastal communities. **NAML respectfully requests the funding of NOAA at no less than $7.5 billion.** Additionally, within NOAA's Operations, Research, and Facilities (ORF) Account, NAML requests no less than the FY 2024 enacted amounts listed amounts for the following programs:

- The **National Ocean Service ($671.5 million, FY 2024 enacted level)** enables the safe, sustainable, and efficient use of marine and coastal resources across sectors including maritime commerce and transportation, fishing, aquaculture, energy development, recreation, and inland export/import.
    - **Integrated Ocean Observation System Regional Observations ($56 million)** benefits the economy, public safety, and the environment through its network that collects real-time observing data, develops tracking and predictive tools, and delivers tailed products to stakeholders and decision-makers.
    - **Competitive Research ($20.0 million, FY 2024 enacted level)** uses a competitive, external grant process to fund regional-scale and targeted research and assessment activities that support NOAA's coastal mission areas, including the only national grant programs dedicated to research topics in the *HAB and Hypoxia Research and Control Act.*
    - **National Estuarine Research Reserve System ($33.3 million, FY 2024 enacted level)** is a federal-state partnership that uses research and education to protect and understand estuarine resources, while functioning as sentinel sites within a changing environment.
    - **National Marine Sanctuaries and Marine Protected Areas ($67.0 million, FY 2024 enacted level)** conserves and facilitates sustainable use of seascapes, wildlife, and maritime heritage resources.
- Within funding for the National Marine Fisheries Service, NAML requests the amounts below for the following programs:
    - **Prescott Grant Program ($4.5 million, FY 2024 enacted level)** provides competitive grants to stranding network organizations to rescue, rehabilitate, or investigate sick, injured, or distressed marine mammals and to determine the cause of death or disease of dead marine mammals.
    - **Aquaculture ($24.0 million, FY 2024 enacted level)** provides science, services, and policies to support the significant expansion and sustainability of U.S. marine aquaculture.
- **Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research ($656.1 million, FY 2024 enacted level)** included in the Senate report, including no less than the:

- **National Sea Grant College Program ($116.9 million)** turns research into actions that support science-based sustainable practices around resilient communities and economies, sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, healthy coastal ecosystems, and environmental literacy and workforce development.
- **Sea Grant Aquaculture Research ($18 million)** is the largest, most comprehensive government grant program dedicated to supporting marine aquaculture development with grants addressing some of the top challenges to marine aquaculture.
- **Ocean Exploration and Research ($46.0 million, FY 2024 enacted level)** is the only federal program dedicated to ocean exploration.
- **National Oceanographic Partnership Program ($2.5 million, FY 2024 enacted level)** is a unique catalyst for participation by nongovernmental organizations and industry in federal ocean research and education projects in the areas of data, resources, education, and communication.
- **Sustained Ocean Observations and Monitoring ($52.5 million, FY 2024 enacted level)** is a global system for observations and analysis of marine and ocean variables to support operational ocean services worldwide.
- **Office of Education** (**$35.5 million, FY 2024 enacted level)** provides leadership on education matters, promotes NOAA products, and services to the public, and provides support for education activities across the agency.
    - **Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) Regional Programs ($8.7 million, FY 2024 enacted level)** is an environmental education program for K–12 students and educators that promotes locally relevant, authentic experiential learning.
    - **Jose E. Serrano Educational Partnership Program with Minority Serving Institutions ($20.8 million, FY 2024 enacted level**) uses a competitive process to provide financial assistance to students and Minority Serving Institutions that train students and conduct research in NOAA mission sciences.

NSF

NSF plays a key role in our nation's security, stability, and prosperity and has spurred many U.S. innovations that have made our nation the global leader in advancing research and education.

NAML respectfully requests Congress fund NSF at no less than $16.7 billion, the congressionally authorized level. With this increase, NAML requests no less than the listed amounts for the following programs:

- **Research and Related Activities ($7.2 billion, FY 2024 enacted level)** invests in both early-stage research and development of a future-focused science and engineering workforce that can accelerate progress in basic science and engineering research as well as support the private sector.
- **STEM Education ($1.2 billion, FY 2024 enacted level)** advances equity, builds a future workforce for the needs of today and the industries of the future, and expands STEM opportunities to everyone, everywhere.

NASA
NASA's Earth-facing missions, which help us understand our planet on both a large and a small-scale, are of particular interest to NAML.

NAML requests no less than **$7.3 billion for Science (FY 2024 enacted level) and $2.2 billion for Earth Science (FY 2024 enacted level).**

Concluding Remarks
Investing in the programs and agencies at no less than the levels highlighted above will help ensure U.S. **security—as it relates to economic, food, homeland, and environmental security—we request that the subcommittee reject any proposed reductions to extramural science programs and instead fund these programs at the levels provided above.** These programs should be adequately funded now, not in response to the next disaster, and we fear these programs will not recover from the impacts of such drastic proposed cuts, and further that the investigators leading this research will leave the U.S. for investment support in other countries.

Thank you in advance for your work on FY 2026 appropriations and for your time and consideration of this request. NAML would be happy to answer any questions or provide any additional information.