

From the Desk of Dr. Sullivan



Dr. Kathryn D. Sullivan, Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and NOAA Administrator

Dear friends of NOAA,

NOAA is one of the most valuable service agencies in the U.S. government. We make earth system science matter for millions of Americans every day. Through our network of observations, forecasts, and assessments, we strive to provide the foresight and information people need to live well and safely on this dynamic planet. At NOAA, we call this information “environmental intelligence,” and producing it is at the core of our mission.

The intelligence and the services NOAA provides are in higher demand today than ever before. Increases in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events mean that NOAA must forecast and respond to these events with skill and accuracy. But the increased demand for our services goes beyond just extreme weather. Our marine transportation system must be more efficient to accommodate growing volume of commerce at our ports. NOAA provides the positioning data, tide and currents information, and nautical charts that ensure safe navigation and keep commerce flowing. Our marine ecosystems are changing due to climate and other stressors, thereby increasing the need for more scientific assessments to sustain and promote economically viable commercial and recreational fisheries, and ensure that threatened and endangered species are protected.

NOAA’s FY 2015 budget request of approximately \$5.5 billion aims not only to enhance public safety and community resiliency, but also to make smart investments via innovative science and research to better position NOAA for the future. This budget request continues efforts to strike the right balance between our oceanic and atmospheric missions, our internal and extramural programs, and our long-range and short-term research investments, while maintaining strong fiscal discipline. In the FY 2015 budget, we focus our investments in three areas: infrastructure, innovation, and services.

Investing in Mission-Critical Infrastructure

This budget makes investments in infrastructure improvements that are critical to effectively execute NOAA’s diverse mission portfolio. NOAA is the only federal agency with the operational responsibility to provide critical and accurate weather, water, ocean, climate, and ecosystem forecasts. Our global observing systems are the foundation of the information and data we provide – without them we are essentially “flying blind” and the level of uncertainty in our forecasts increases at a time when people are demanding more precision. Investments are necessary today to ensure NOAA’s fleet of research vessels and observational platforms can continue to provide the environmental intelligence needed to meet our mission and are capable of gathering data in extreme environments, such as the Arctic. Specifically, this budget requests investments to launch new polar and geostationary satellites on time, build a new ocean class research vessel, ensure essential IT and physical infrastructure to support the Weather-Ready Nation initiative, and support atmospheric and coastal monitoring activities.

Strengthening Scientific and Programmatic Innovation

NOAA is a service agency—but one that is supported by some of the best science in the world. This budget continues to invest in the research and development needed today for the innovations of tomorrow. Developing the latest technological advancements and promoting a fundamental understanding of our planet will keep our products and services viable, improve cost efficiency and management effectiveness, maximize economic

opportunity, and leverage our partnerships with external stakeholders. From making advancements in sustainable fisheries management to evolving NOAA's National Weather Service, this budget includes key investments to strengthen, support, and foster innovation within the organization. This includes work to advance electronic monitoring and next generation stock assessments; continue to improve our weather products and services; and, invest in a range of research and development activities that will support the goals of the President's Climate Action Plan.

Providing Services to Enhance Community Resilience

In 2013, the United States experienced seven weather- and climate-related disaster events with losses exceeding \$1 billion apiece. Each of these events caused widespread damage and devastated families, businesses and communities. The question of our times isn't "if" the next big event is going to hit, but "when" it will hit, and how hard a blow it will deliver to our society and our economy. NOAA's environmental intelligence plays a vital role to ensure efficient and safe air and ocean transportation. Recognizing this, this budget invests in the services and information that promote community and economic resilience in advance and in the aftermath of these kinds of severe events.

The FY 2015 budget makes critical investments in: expanding coastal inundation tools to enable better flood warnings, supporting other activities that improve communities' ability to respond to extreme events, improving ecological forecasting, and understanding the potential environmental impacts of growing commerce in the Arctic.

Achieving Organizational Excellence

Demand for NOAA's environmental intelligence and services is rising at the same time that the mix of services needed is evolving and budget pressures are increasing. These competing tensions place a premium on achieving organizational excellence: attracting and retaining the best talent; being brilliant at the basics of execution; operating with both high efficiency and optimal effectiveness. The FY 2015 budget proposes targeted investments that are needed to drive improved results in sustaining and developing our workforce's skills and provides much-needed capacity in our grants, finance, and workforce management departments.

NOAA is fortunate to have a highly-skilled and passionate workforce. Our people come to work each day committed to serving the public and advancing our mission. Our work touches every community across the United States, and we aim to perform at the highest level and with discipline and consistency. Every one of our investments in the fiscal year 2015 budget – from improving products and services to positioning ourselves for the future – will help the organization as a whole strive for excellence and deliver the environmental intelligence our country has come to rely upon.



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