

Dear Senators and Representatives,

With the release of "An American Budget" on February 12, 2018, the Trump Administration again proposed eliminating or slashing vital National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) grants and programs. The Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) budget proposal would slash over \$1 billion from NOAA, harming our nation's ocean and coastal economy and environment.

The undersigned include groups and individuals that support NOAA's ocean, coastal, and fisheries programs. **We write to express our extreme dismay at the FY19 NOAA budget proposal and to ask that you ensure that no such budget becomes a reality for our nation's premier ocean agency. We urge you to maintain funding for NOAA at or above current levels.**

At the same time, you and your colleagues in Congress are working to finalize the FY18 budget for NOAA. We applaud your work in appropriating \$400 million in funding to NOAA for hurricane recovery efforts in the wake of the 2017 hurricane season. While you recognized the important role NOAA plays for coastal communities in disaster funding, we hope you will continue to recognize the role NOAA plays year-round, across the country, for communities and economies that depend on our oceans and coasts. **We urge you to ensure that the final FY18 budget for NOAA maintains at least current funding levels, and makes additional investments in our oceans and coastal communities where possible.**

NOAA's mission, to understand, protect, restore, and manage our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes, is vitally important to sustain these resources and our economy. The U.S. ocean and coastal economy contributes \$359 billion annually to the nation's GDP and supports 3 million jobs. There is a good reason that NOAA is in the Department of Commerce, and adequate funding is vital to support a healthy and resilient ocean that can maintain and grow our coastal economies and communities. For example, our nation's fisheries and seafood sector is a \$214 billion dollar industry and fishermen rely on information from NOAA to make the most informed decisions on where to fish, how to fish and when to fish. Coastal wetland buffer zones in the U.S. are estimated to provide \$23.2 billion per year in storm protection, and NOAA works to build resilient coasts that are more storm-ready and prepared for threats like sea level rise and ocean acidification.

Much of the U.S. ocean is under federal jurisdiction, and yet many of NOAA's programs focus on pushing resources and decision-making power out to regions, states and communities. From region-by-region fishery management, region-specific programs in places like the Arctic, extramural funding that supports state agencies and universities, place-based conservation in our estuaries and oceans and more, NOAA is providing leverage for hardworking people on the coast and on the water who are fighting for a stronger economy and a healthier ocean.

We ask that you also consider the balance between NOAA's oceanic and atmospheric missions, and the nexus between the two. Americans should not have to choose between weather satellites and ocean and coastal resources like coral reefs and marine mammals. We need both. NOAA's ocean programs support many other federal agencies and missions that will also suffer if NOAA funding is cut. For example, ocean observations and monitoring provide critical information for severe storm tracking and

weather forecasting. And ocean programs facilitate homeland security and national defense functions, including U.S. Navy operations and U.S. Coast Guard search and rescue.

We urge Congress to fund NOAA at current levels or higher in FY18 and FY19 and to prioritize investments in ocean, coastal, and fisheries programs.

Sincerely,

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National Estuarine Research Reserve Association

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