

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2016

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Mikulski:

As you develop your fiscal year 2017 (FY 2017) appropriations bill, we strongly urge you to provide robust funding for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) programs and research that protect and bolster our coastal communities as well as the critical habitats and ecosystems of the nation's shoreline. North America has been particularly hard hit by severe weather in recent years, so investing in resilience has become ever more important. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) estimates that every \$1 invested in community resilience will reduce disaster damages by \$4. Our coasts in particular benefit from such investment. Over half of our nation lives in coastal communities, and in 2013 the ocean economy supported over 3 million jobs and contributed over \$359 billion to the GDP of the United States. Protecting lives and property requires science and know-how that NOAA is uniquely able to provide. We respectfully request your support for the following programs:

Coastal Zone Management and Services: Coastal states and local governments are essential to fostering resilient coastal communities and managing natural resources. The challenges associated with coastal resilience are growing with increased use of ecosystem services and complicated by a changing climate. Voluntary partnerships between NOAA and coastal and Great Lakes states form the basis of the National Ocean Service's (NOS) approach under the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA). NOAA provides financial assistance, policy guidance, coordination and leadership, technical assistance, and other support to implement 34 state coastal zone management programs. *We urge that \$53.847 million in funding be adopted for FY 2017, the President's budget request, to support continued investment in coastal resilience.*

Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Grants: These grants to coastal states and territories support a wide variety of projects that promote smart economic development in coastal communities. States and territories match federal awards and leverage additional local and private investment, deepening the impact of these grants. These grants have assisted projects as diverse as supporting working waterfronts, monitoring shellfish beds, planning public access projects, mapping storm vulnerability, improving beach recreation, and developing adaptation strategies for threatened coastal regions. These projects are vital to assisting coastal

communities with real challenges, helping to protect and grow the coastal economy. *We urge that \$111 million in funding be adopted for FY 2017, an increase of \$20.4 million over the President's budget request, to support continued investment in coastal resilience.*

National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS): The President's Budget proposes \$23 million for the 28 National Estuarine Research Reserves, to maintain healthy estuaries that are critical to minimizing impacts from natural disasters. NERRS funding provides states with funding to operate reserves located in coastal communities. By protecting estuaries and coasts, NERRS reduces community vulnerability to hazards, supports the nation's coastal economy, and provides abundant high-quality scientific research. Funding for the program is matched by the states and leveraged, resulting in an average of more than five additional partners at each reserve. *We urge that \$23.9 million in funding be adopted for FY 2017, an increase of \$900,000 over the President's Budget request for operations, and for Procurement, Acquisitions, and Construction activities we urge the President's request of \$1.7 million be adopted, to support existing NERRS sites and the addition of new NERRS sites.*

Coastal Resilience Grants: For FY 2017, NOAA is proposing to combine the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants program with the NOS's Regional Coastal Resilience Grant Program. The combined program will emphasize the existing priorities of both programs but also look to the interconnectedness between healthy coastal habitats and communities. These grants will help states, local communities, and other stakeholders produce on-the-ground results that benefit both the economy and the environment, including cutting edge science and practical tools like maps and surveys. *We urge the Regional Coastal Resilience Grants and Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants programs be collectively funded at \$20 million, the President's FY 2017 budget request. Further, we ask that the committee instruct NOAA to prioritize projects that are coordinated with resilience efforts of the Governors, Directors of Coastal Zone Management Programs, and Directors of Environmental Management programs in eligible states. Coordinated efforts from state, federal, tribal partners, non-governmental organizations, and academia should be encouraged.*

National Sea Grant College Program: The National Sea Grant College Program is a major leader in addressing economic and environmental issues in coastal communities, with outreach and research missions that support smart economic growth. Sea Grant is fundamental to helping communities prepare for major coastal catastrophes like hurricanes and oil spills, preserving working waterfronts and coastal heritage, and advancing coastal tourism that is vital to coastal economies. By virtue of the funding provided by this subcommittee, in 2014 an estimated \$450M in direct economic benefits were delivered to the Nation (a 7 to 1 return on the federal investment), an estimated 6,500 new businesses were created or retained, more than 17,500 jobs were created or retained due to Sea Grant efforts, and 21,700 acres of ecosystems were restored. *We urge that \$80 million in funding be adopted for FY 2017, an increase of \$11.1 million over the President's Budget request, to support the existing network and ongoing activities and provide additional funding to strengthen Sea Grant's work related to coastal resilience.*

National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund: Enacted as part of the FY 2016 Consolidated Appropriations Act, the National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund will provide grants to states, tribes, NGOs, and academic institutions for coastal restoration and research. The fund will be co-managed by NOAA and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Eligible uses of funds are expected to include habitat restoration and protection, smart coastal development, cooperative fisheries and resource management, protection of critical coastal public infrastructure, and baseline data collection on the effects of sea level rise, changing ocean chemistry, and other coastal processes. *We urge that \$10 million in funding be adopted for FY 2017, the President's budget request, to support a dedicated fund for the oceans and coasts.*

We appreciate your support for these important programs. We ask that you strongly support these budget items in your efforts to produce a Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2017.

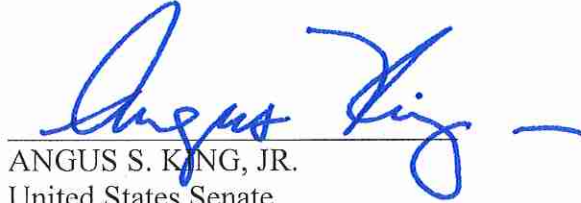
Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senate



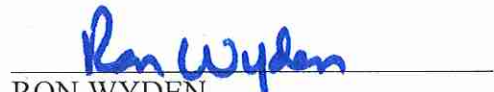
ANGUS S. KING, JR.
United States Senate



TAMMY BALDWIN
United States Senate



MAZIE K. HIRONO
United States Senate



RON WYDEN
United States Senate



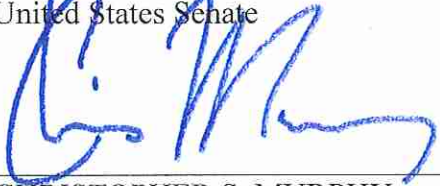
JEANNE SHAHEEN
United States Senate



JACK REED
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER A. COONS
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



JEFFREY A. MERKLEY
United States Senate



CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senate



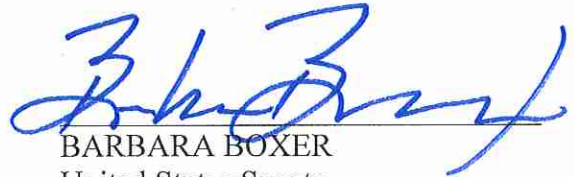
EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senate



CORY A. BOOKER
United States Senate



GARY C. PETERS
United States Senate



BARBARA BOXER
United States Senate



BERNARD SANDERS
United States Senate