

Letter from Participants in the International Marine Conservation Congress in Fairfax VA

June 1, 2009

The Honorable Daniel K. Inouye, Chair, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Thad Cochran, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Committee
The Honorable David R. Obey, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable Jerry Lewis, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Committee

Dear Senators Inouye and Cochran, and Congressmen Obey and Lewis:

The United States has more ocean under its jurisdiction than any other nation, and our economy, jobs, safety and well-being critically depend on the health of our oceans. As natural and social scientists and other professionals participating in the International Marine Conservation Congress near Washington DC, who share a profound concern about maintaining and restoring the health of our oceans, we write to respectfully request that Congress increase the NOAA 2010 budget from the President's request of \$4.4 billion to \$5.0 billion, plus an amount sufficient to cover the requirements of the proposed National Climate Service in NOAA.

Specifically, we believe that \$400 million of this increase should go to programs of the National Ocean Service, whose proposed budget is actually less than it was in 2004. Crucial habitat conservation programs are located in the National Ocean Service, including the National Marine Sanctuary Program. The \$5.0 billion should also provide meaningful real increases for the Protected Species Program of the National Marine Fisheries Service and for planning throughout NOAA for marine ecosystem-based spatial management.

We are fully aware of the intense demands on the Federal budget, but are also well-positioned to see that more investment in our leading ocean agency is long overdue, and will pay handsome dividends in terms of protecting and recovering the essential ecosystems services and jobs that our oceans produce. Coastal states provide approximately 80% of the jobs and 82% of the nation's Gross Domestic Product. These, in turn, critically depend on the health of our oceans.

A torrent of scientific research over the last 10 years has shown that America's and the world's oceans are in deep trouble because of overexploitation of marine life, destructive fishing methods, coastal development, introduced species, pollution, global warming and ocean acidification. These threaten the integrity of marine ecosystems, the productivity of our fisheries, tourism, the value of our coastal real estate and the safety of Americans living in our coastal communities. The stimulus package for NOAA does not adequately address these threats to our oceans. NOAA has the capacity to accomplish more under its new leadership if Congress gives it adequate resources.

Our oceans are not a luxury we can squander. Nor are they a resource we can do without, given America's dependence on them.

We urge you to enable NOAA to address the ever-increasing problems affecting our oceans and coasts by increasing its 2010 funding by \$600 million. We have no doubt that this investment will bring major dividends to the American people.

Sincerely,

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* Affiliations are for identification purposes only, and do not imply institutional endorsement

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