

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 29, 2025

Mr. Russell Vought
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th St NW
Washington, DC 20503

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Director Vought and Secretary Lutnick:

We write to express deep concern regarding the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) fiscal year (FY) 2025 spending plan, approved by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in August. This NOAA spending plan is \$246 million short of the funds Congress appropriated to NOAA in the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Public Law 119–4). Given this last-minute withholding of funding, we request information on why funding for NOAA is not being allocated and spent as congressionally directed.

NOAA is mandated by Congress to support a variety of critical services for the nation, including public safety during extreme weather events, providing accurate weather forecasts, maritime activities, and economic security.^{1,2,3} The agency helps support a \$183 billion seafood industry and manages fisheries to ensure sustainable and safe seafood for future generations.^{4,5} NOAA also works to protect coastal and marine resources that provide economic benefits for coastal communities through dollars directly spent on recreation and tourism. Conserving coastal places protects against flooding, enhances water quality, and helps coastal counties contribute \$9 trillion to the U.S. economy.^{6,7}

On March 15, 2025, Public Law 119–4 was signed into law, extending FY24 spending into FY25.⁸ The administration has not apportioned funding in accordance with the law. First, the administration illegally withheld \$100 million that Congress classified as emergency funding for NOAA in FY25 continuing resolution (CR), as the Chair and Vice Chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee have previously stated.⁹ Additionally, the Department of Commerce proposed a \$19 million transfer out of NOAA to the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) to

¹ <https://www.weather.gov/forecastmaps/>

² <https://www.oig.doc.gov/wp-content/OIGPublications/OIG-25-007-A-Final-Report.pdf#:~:text=8%20According%20to%20its%20official%20metrics%2C%20NHC,intensity%20forecast%20errors%20decreased%20by%2050%20percent>

³ <https://www.weather.gov/media/marine/uscgmoa2010.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/national/population-assessments/fish-stock-assessment-report>

⁵ <https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/insight/noaas-seafood-inspection-program>

⁶ <https://nmsmarineprotectedareas.blob.core.windows.net/marineprotectedareas-prod/media/docs/2020-mpa-building-effective-conservation-networks.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.noaa.gov/ocean-coasts>

⁸ <https://www.congress.gov/119/plaws/publ4/PLAW-119publ4.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/32725letterreemergencydesignations.pdf>

cover shortfalls caused by OMB, which also denied \$20 million in FY25 funding for BIS classified as emergency spending under the CR.¹⁰ Finally, OMB has not apportioned approximately \$127 million for NOAA included in the FY25 CR. The Department subsequently proposed obligating some of this funding for the midlife repair upgrades of the NOAA Vessel *Henry B. Bigelow*.

The NOAA spending plan cuts funding across multiple NOAA line offices, including the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, the National Ocean Service, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and the National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service.¹¹ These cuts impact research labs, competitive research grants, cooperative institutes, and fisheries management programs. For example, the National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund was eliminated, the Coastal Zone Management program was cut by \$1.5 million, the National Estuarine Research Reserve System was cut by \$4 million, the National Sea Grant and Aquaculture programs were cut by a combined \$8.73 million, and climate research was cut by more than \$58 million.

Cuts to these NOAA programs will lead to environmental damage, economic loss, and social harm across the nation. For example, cuts to the National Sea Grant program mean that fishermen in Gulf states will lose the fishery management support that Sea Grant provides for commercially and recreationally important reef fish species like snapper, communities in the Great Lakes will no longer benefit from Sea Grant's support to address aquatic invasive species or prepare for coastal storms, and shellfish growers in the Chesapeake Bay and beyond will lose critical resources to support their small aquaculture businesses. Furthermore, cutting Coastal Zone Management competitive research grants will impact coastal communities in Washington, Oregon, Massachusetts, Maine, Wisconsin, and New Hampshire, where FY25 research grants have been awarded but the funding may not be obligated.

The administration and OMB must make apportionment decisions within the boundaries of laws enacted by Congress, and we expect you to provide NOAA with its full amount of congressionally appropriated funding. We are concerned that the decision to withhold and redirect funding for NOAA could undermine decades of work to ensure the safety of Americans and the economic security of the nation. This work produces economic and public safety benefits that far outweigh the investments Congress has provided for NOAA's work. Thank you and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

¹⁰ <https://openomb.org/file/11452988>

¹¹ <https://news.bgov.com/bloomberg-government-news/trump-moves-around-congress-to-cut-climate-ocean-science-funds>

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Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Van Hollen", written over a horizontal line.

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

cc: Ms. Laura Grimm, Acting Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration