



October 27, 2006

Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Science, Space, Justice
and Commerce
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Science
and Justice
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Alan Mollohan
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Science, Space, Justice
and Commerce
Committee on Appropriations
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Science
and Justice
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Wolf, Chairman Shelby, Representative Mollohan and Senator Mikulski:

As the leaders of the Consortium for Ocean Research and Education (CORE) and the Weather Coalition (WC) – organizations with collective interests in and concerns about national oceanic and atmospheric research capabilities -- we write to urge the conferees to provide the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) with the FY 2007 funding level of \$4.4 billion as recommended in the Senate bill. NOAA's research and operational programs in these particular areas are vitally important for our Nation's long term national and economic security as well as our overall quality of life.

CORE is a non-profit association representing leading ocean research and education institutions. Since 1994, CORE has established a leadership role on oceanographic issues and the development of marine science policy. The Weather Coalition brings together industry, state and local governments, and academia for the purpose of informing policy makers about the importance of the country's weather prediction and warning capabilities and to provide assessments of the nation's socioeconomic vulnerability to weather. The results will be enhanced competitiveness for U.S. industry, improved support for national defense, and increased protection of life and property.

Weather and climate sensitive industries, both directly and indirectly, account for about one-third of the Nation's GDP ranging from finance, insurance, and real estate to services, retail and wholesale trade and manufacturing. Industries directly impacted by weather such as agriculture, construction, energy distribution, and outdoor recreation account for nearly 10% of GDP. Six billion dollars annually is lost in economic efficiencies as a result of air traffic delays, of which 70% is attributed to weather. Total annual Federal spending for weather information is about \$25 per household (including aviation and defense, in addition to NOAA), which produces an annual benefit-cost ratio of 4.4 to 1 for U.S. households alone, or net national benefits of \$8.8 billion a year. This does not include benefits in agriculture, transportation, construction, or benefits to households in other countries that rely on weather information from the United States.

Preliminary estimates of the potential economic benefits from new investments in an Integrated Ocean Observing System in US waters range from \$500 million to \$1 billion per year, estimated largely in terms of increased economic activity and social surplus realized as a result of improved information about coastal marine conditions. The annual economic return to the U.S. economy associated with NOAA's El Niño ocean observing and forecast system is between 13 and 26%, which is significantly higher than the Office of Management and Budget's 5.8% minimum rate of return specified for Federal projects.

The examples help demonstrate that the services and research results provided by NOAA -- from predicting coastal hazards to managing drought and wildfires to ensuring safe and healthy seafood -- touch the lives of every American. If funded at the \$4.4 billion level as recommended by the Senate NOAA would be able to continue serving the varied interests of our Nation by providing accurate and up-to-date weather forecasting, fisheries management information, prediction and tracking information related to severe weather, access to navigational information, scientific research and vital local community assistance. While we recognize the difficult budget constraints the conferees are under, CORE and the Weather Coalition urge you to consider NOAA as one of those investments vital for the long term health of the Nation.

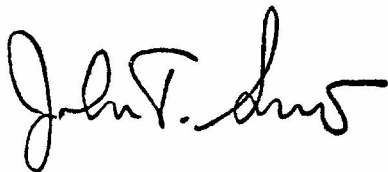
Sincerely,



Rear Admiral Richard D. West, U.S. Navy (Retired)
President, Consortium for Oceanographic Research and Education



Ray J. Ban
Executive Vice President, The Weather Channel
Co-Chair of the Weather Coalition



John T. Snow
Director, Oklahoma Weather Center and Dean, College of Atmospheric and Geographic Sciences, University of Oklahoma
Co-Chair of the Weather Coalition