

Committee on Resources

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**WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF
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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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Good morning, Chairman Gilchrest and Members of the Subcommittee. I am Timothy Keeney, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). I appreciate the opportunity to present NOAA's perspective on the Weather and Oceans Resources Realignment Act, H.R. 4368.

H.R. 4368 proposes to transfer both the administration and functions of NOAA, in their entirety, to the Department of the Interior, where NOAA would be maintained as a distinct entity. No time line is provided for the transfer.

I would like to preface my remarks by thanking the bill's author, Representative Jim Saxton, for his dedication to conserving America's precious ocean resources. For the last twenty years, he has worked tirelessly and effectively for his constituents, and he has also been a supporter of NOAA while serving with distinction as both the Chairman, Vice Chairman and as Member of this Subcommittee.

In commenting on this legislation, I wanted to focus on two issues: First, has NOAA performed its mission successfully as part of the Department of Commerce and through cooperation with other Executive Branch agencies, and have the American people benefited from NOAA being housed in the Department of Commerce? Second, what are the anticipated costs of moving NOAA to the Department of the Interior?

NOAA AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

On October 3, 2005, NOAA will celebrate its 35th anniversary as part of the Department of Commerce. In a July 1970 statement to Congress, President Nixon proposed creating NOAA to serve a national need "...for better protection of life and property from natural hazards...for a better understanding of the total environment...[and] for exploration and development leading to the intelligent use of our marine resources..."

By every objective measure, NOAA has met or exceeded these expectations. As events of the past month have shown, the United States is the most severe-weather prone country on Earth. Approximately 90 percent of all Presidentially-declared disasters are weather related. The modernization of the National Weather Service and dedication of our employees has resulted in the average warning lead time for tornadoes increasing to 13 minutes from less than two minutes when NOAA was created.

When President Bush visited the National Hurricane Center in Miami earlier this month he personally thanked our employees for the accuracy of their forecasts and warnings which helped to save lives and property when Hurricanes Charley and Frances swept through the southeastern US and the Caribbean. This success was truly a NOAA-wide effort, with virtually every line office in NOAA contributing in some way to the more accurate forecasts.

We also point with pride to NOAA's response to the increasing migration of the US population to our coasts. Currently, more than half our population, approximately 141 million people, resides within 50 miles of

the coasts and Great Lakes. New programs have been created to manage this historical migration to the coasts, such as the Coastal Zone Management program, which now encompasses virtually every coastal and Great Lakes state.

It should be stressed that during the time-frame being referenced, NOAA has been an integral part of the Department of Commerce. Due to its strategic impact on the economic and environmental welfare of the Nation, NOAA commands a central place within the Department of Commerce. As Secretary Evans noted when he announced the transmittal of the Administration's proposed NOAA organic act to Congress, NOAA's products and services touch 30 percent of the Nation's GDP and supports jobs for more than 13 million citizens. The commercial fishing industry adds approximately \$28.5 billion, and marine recreational fishing activities add approximately \$25 billion to the national economy on a yearly basis. In fact, important economic decisions are made every day based upon science and services that NOAA provides, including weather and climate forecasting, sustainable fisheries, coastal zone management, and navigational safety. With NOAA as an integral element of this agency, the Commerce Department is the only Federal department that integrates economics, technology, trade, and the environment as part of a formula to expand the economy; it is a synergy that exists nowhere else.

Let me provide a few examples:

-- The Economic Development Administration (EDA) and NOAA have collaborated closely in the development and implementation of the NOAA-led Portfields Initiative. As sister Commerce agencies, EDA and NOAA have been close collaborators on brownfields redevelopment, coastal development, and marine transportation system development issues; which come together nicely within the Portfields framework. The Portfields Initiative, a spin-off from the larger Brownfields Interagency Working Group (IWG), is a federal interagency project that will focus on the redevelopment and reuse of brownfields in or around ports, harbors, and marine transportation hubs with emphasis on development of environmentally sound port facilities.

-- The economic value of the commercial fishing industry is \$28.5 billion annually. In 2002, the seafood processing and wholesale sectors alone employed 72,000 people. NOAA is working with the Economic Development Administration (EDA) to provide economic assistance to fishermen and fishing communities that have been affected by NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service fisheries restrictions.

-- The value of the marine recreational fishing industry is approximately \$25 billion annually. NOAA aims to protect the value of fish stocks to the economy by promoting healthy marine recreational fisheries.

-- Last month, NOAA Fisheries released a draft of an options paper for the economically distressed U.S. shrimp industry. The paper provides guidance to shrimpers on how to remain competitive. Within the Department of Commerce, the International Trade Administration provided input in order to ensure that the paper accurately reflected the current global commercial shrimp market.

-- Aquaculture is the world's most rapidly growing sector of food production. Within the Department of Commerce, NOAA and NIST are both working to develop technology could help restore depleted salmon species, manage many wild fish stocks, and benefit the growing world aquaculture industry. By the year 2010, it is estimated that nearly 1 billion hatchery fish will need to be processed worldwide. Current vaccination practices in hatcheries are not fully reliable and add stress to the young fish. The NIST Advanced Technology Program is funding a three year project for \$2 million for the development of a faster, cheaper, and more reliable mobile vaccination technology to vaccinate up to 2 fish per minute in a hatchery with traceable tags. This research could greatly enhance NOAA's vision for sustainable aquaculture for food production and stock enhancement.

-- Waterborne cargo contributes more than \$742 billion to Gross Domestic Product and sustains more than 13 million jobs. Promoting safe navigation is a critical contribution of NOAA to the nation's economy. Ninety-five percent of all goods in US foreign trade enter and leave this country by ship. On June 30th, NOAA announced it would provide operational forecasts for ship traffic in Galveston Bay, the second largest port in North America. This system provides mariners, port managers and emergency response teams with present and future conditions of water levels, currents, temperature and salinity. All of this results in savings to shippers and the American exporter and consumer.

-- Geomagnetic storms can wreak havoc on our Nation's electrical grid, commercial aviation, and

telecommunications. In 1997, a solar storm partially destroyed a communications satellite. NOAA helps provide early warnings allowing industry to take measures to prepare for these storms. The net economic value to industry of these forecasts has been estimated at over \$350 million over a period of three years, far in excess of the \$100 million cost of the system.

-- The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) works closely with NOAA in developing hurricane-resistant structures. For example, in 2001, NIST used propeller blasts from Hercules C-130s turboprop aircraft to subject instrument-laden test homes to sustained wind levels comparable to those of a hurricane. The wind resistance of houses cannot be tested in traditional wind tunnels, which are too small. Data analysis yielded computer models that can tell home-builders and manufacturers the actual wind resistance of different types of residential buildings and materials under realistic wind conditions.

-- Travel and tourism is the nation's largest employer, and second largest contributor to the Nation's Gross Domestic Product, generating \$700 billion annually. Beaches are the largest tourist destination, with coastal states earning 85 percent of all tourist revenues. Through its National Marine Sanctuaries; National Estuarine Research Reserves; Coastal Zone Management activities; coral conservation programs; and partnerships with states to manage access to coastal areas on a sustainable basis and provide recreational opportunities, NOAA helps contribute to the vitality of this industry.

-- NOS and the Office of Coast Survey have worked well with the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) on Marine Transportation System issues as co-leads for Commerce on the Interagency Committee for the Marine Transportation System (ICMTS). NOS and BIS look forward to further interagency cooperation in support of marine transportation improvements for economic, safety and security reasons.

In addition to these examples of cooperation with other agencies within the Department of Commerce, there are numerous examples of interagency cooperation between NOAA and the Department of Interior (DOI), which provide evidence that merging NOAA with Interior is not necessary to ensure effective cooperation.

Just a few of these examples are:

-- NOAA and DOI, as co-chairs of the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, participate in many joint efforts in the area of coral reef conservation, preservation and restoration. These include over \$2 million annually in state and territory management grants, and mapping and monitoring of coral reefs. Also, NOAA works with the National Park Service in siting and supporting NOAA's Coral Reef Early Warning Stations in the U.S. Virgin Islands and elsewhere.

-- NOAA and the National Park Service, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) cooperate in implementing the South Florida Ecosystem Restoration, and in supporting the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan.

-- The Department of Commerce is the co-chair, together with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior, of the National Invasive Species Council. NOAA and the FWS are co-chairs of the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force. Among the many cooperative efforts in this area is the development of new ballast water management technologies.

-- DOI and NOAA are partners in implementing Executive Order 13158 on Marine Protected Areas. NOAA and the National Park Service (NPS), the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the Minerals Management Service (MMS) are working together on developing an inventory of Marine Managed Areas, maintaining the MPA Website, and coordinating with the Marine Protected Areas Federal Advisory Committee chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act.

-- NOAA, through the National Marine Fisheries Service, works with DOI on many protected species and hydropower issues. The agencies share jurisdiction for the conservation of marine turtles; FWS focusing on nesting beach conservation activities, and NOAA working on conservation and recovery of these species in their marine habitats. NOAA provides scientific expertise and management advice on marine species listed under the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which DOI is the lead agency for the United States government. The agencies have multiple joint policies and guidelines related to implementation of the Endangered Species Act. Also, NOAA and DOI share authority under Section 18 of the Federal Power Act to prescribe fishways to ensure safe fish passage at non-Federal hydropower facilities licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

-- NOAA, through the National Weather Service, supports the interagency fire program efforts by providing targeted weather forecasts to support DOI's fire pre-suppression and suppression activities. Also, NWS and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) cooperate on the Federal Hydrology Infrastructure, which provides river and flood forecasting.

-- NOAA works closely with and in support of DOI's Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC), National Spatial Data Infrastructure (NSDI), and Geospatial One-Stop (GOS) activities. The benefits of this cooperation include enhanced access to marine and coastal data utilizing metadata and the FGDC clearinghouse system and Geospatial One-Stop; increased quality of marine and coastal geospatial data through standardization and training; and, improvements in data and systems interoperability.

The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy, after three years of studying the United States government's ocean policies, how agencies are structured, and how they function, did not see any need to remove NOAA from the Commerce Department at this time. In answer to my second question, the Administration strongly believes that the American people benefit from the strong integration of economic and environmental issues which results from NOAA being part of the Commerce Department.

ANTICIPATED COSTS OF TRANSFERRING NOAA TO THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

It is clear from other major government reorganizations that the cost to the taxpayers of such moves can be very high. First, there is the loss of productivity that can be expected with such a large move of personnel. Second, the change of corporate culture can adversely affect morale. The University of Virginia, in a study on Federal Executive Reorganization, found that federal agency reorganizations result in unforeseen difficulties. The study noted, "The practical task of merging a large number of different programs with their disparate organizational structures, cultures, and procedures would take time and meant that reorganization of the executive department would take many years." Furthermore, we do not believe that transferring NOAA from one Department to another would realize any benefit. A transfer that houses NOAA as a distinct agency within Interior, as it now exists within Commerce, will not provide for better integration of ocean policy or coordination of ocean and coastal activities. There are still many other agencies with significant roles in ocean and coastal policy, and their roles would not be affected by this legislation.

Conclusion

The statement of introduction for H.R. 4368 highlighted the need to make improvements in the way we manage marine fisheries and the unique opportunity provided to us by the release of the report by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy. The Administration shares the Committee's dedication to advancing the next generation of ocean policy. We are firmly committed to sound management and effective conservation of our ocean and coastal resources to meet our nation's environmental, economic, and social goals and our nation's legacy of ocean stewardship. Indeed, demonstrating the President's commitment to NOAA's mission, President Bush has personally visited NOAA facilities on several occasions, including our principal offices in Silver Spring, Maryland.

However, the Administration cannot support the types of changes made in H.R. 4368 without having been afforded the opportunity to fully review the final report of the Ocean Commission. We ask you to allow the Administration to have the 90 days Congress authorized in Public Law 106-256, as amended, to review the final report and discuss with you and with other critical stakeholders how best to achieve our common goals. We believe that the Administration and Congress have a unique opportunity to work together to achieve meaningful improvements in ocean policy, science, and management. Thank you again for your time. I will be happy to take any questions from the Committee.