

# Committee on Resources

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## Witness Testimony

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Testimony of

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President

National Association of Maritime Organizations

Before the Subcommittee on Fisheries

Wildlife, and Oceans

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee my name is Jim Provo. I am Senior Vice President with T. Parker Host, Inc. and President of the National Association of Maritime Organizations (NAMO). On behalf of NAMO, which represents maritime and port interests throughout the United States, and the Marine Transportation Network, a coalition of U.S. shippers, shipowners, pilots, ports, and others, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to present our views regarding Fiscal Year 1997 funding for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) marine navigation service programs.

As you are aware, the Congress has approved for Fiscal Year 1996 a much needed increase of \$4 million for NOAA's marine navigation services. This increase, the first increase since 1981, would not be possible were it not for the support of the full Committee, and particularly its Chairman, Mr. Young, beginning with your recommendation to the House Budget Committee and the House Appropriations Committee that NOAA's Mapping, Charting and Geodesy programs be funded at \$58.5 million in Fiscal Year 1996. We greatly appreciate your support and leadership on this matter, and come before you today, to again seek your support for an additional investment of \$6 million in Fiscal Year 1997 to continue the modernization of these critical marine navigation services.

You recall that Captain Jack Sparks, President of the American Pilots Association (APA), testified before this Subcommittee last summer about the importance of NOAA's marine navigation service programs to the health of the Nation's economy. He cited some startling economic statistics. For example, in 1990, 850 million tons of cargo (at least half of which was hazardous materials) valued at \$500 billion moved through our ports and waterways. In 1991 the commercial shipping industry supported 1.5 million jobs, and generated \$15 billion in federal taxes. This amount of waterborne trade accounts for nearly 98 percent by weight of all U.S. commerce each year. While foreign trade accounts for more than 20 percent of our Nation's gross domestic product today, it is expected to climb to 30 percent by the year 2000.

NOAA's marine navigation services include the programs which provide the Nation with its most fundamental marine navigation tools -- a national portfolio of nautical charts and coast pilots and a suite of oceanographic observations which support the accurate prediction of the state of the tide and its associated currents. These services, as I previously noted, sustain and enhance the Nation's economy; protect life, property, and the environment; promote commercial and recreational use of the Nation's waterways; and maintain National Security. Today, the international trend in commercial shipping is fewer but larger vessels; vessels which push the limits of their draft as they move in out of our ports. This trend demands up-to-date and accurate chart information and tide and current predictions in formats to support traditional and new automated navigation technologies. The importance of the accuracy and quality of these services can not be overstated and is exemplified by the recent increase in maximum draft allowed in Baltimore Harbor from 39.5 feet to 41 feet based on NOAA's real-time tide services. Similar benefits have been seen in the Delaware River and Bay system and in Tampa Bay, Florida. Estimated revenue increases range from \$36,000 to \$288,000 for each additional foot of draft for large bulk and container ships. In fact the Lake Carriers Association estimates that for the largest vessels plying the Great Lakes forfeit 270 tons of cargo for each 1-inch reduction in loaded draft. The benefits of these services are not only important to the economic well-being of our maritime operations, but when utilized they significantly reduce the risk of collisions and groundings, which may result in the loss of life and property, and cause irreparable harm to natural resources.

I am pleased to report that the additional funds recommended by this Committee and appropriated by Congress for Fiscal Year 1996 are making a difference. These funds are being used by NOAA to increase the number of critical surveys being accomplished to chart dangerous shoals and obstructions in and around our largest ports and harbors, to increase the annual number of new up-to-date nautical chart editions (from 200 to 250), and to create a new suite of electronic nautical chart products to support new automated navigation technologies being deployed in the commercial shipping industry. These improvements are an important first step, but additional funds are needed in Fiscal Year 1997 to further increase critical hydrographic surveys and restore the tides and currents prediction programs, including the National Water Level Observation Network, where real-time monitoring and prediction systems can be installed in most of the Nation's largest ports and harbors. These oceanographic prediction services give commercial shipping the extra draft that increases capacity and the foreknowledge of ocean currents, which helps vessels avoid collisions and groundings as they maneuver in narrow channels and make approaches to the dock.

From our perspective, failure to sustain the continued recovery of these navigation services over the past 20 years has unnecessarily threatened the Nation's economic well being and the international competitiveness of our ports and harbors, and created an unacceptable risk to the safety of marine commerce and the protection of the coastal marine environment. A number of recent studies have shown that complete and accurate marine navigation data from electronic chart products coupled with real time tide and current data used in new automated Integrated Bridge Systems could help avoid an estimated 3000 accidents involving commercial vessels in U.S. waters over a 15 year period. As part of the National marine navigation service infrastructure, it is NOAA's responsibility and mandate to provide these data products and services - they are essential to the Nation's maritime business. I strongly urge you to support an additional \$6 million for NOAA's marine navigation service programs for Fiscal Year 1997.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. This concludes my testimony, and I would be pleased to respond to any questions Members of the Subcommittee may have.

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