

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans

Statement

STATEMENT BY THE HONORABLE JIM SAXTON, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON FISHERIES CONSERVATION, WILDLIFE AND OCEANS, AT THE HEARING ON NOAA'S FY'01 BUDGET:

MARCH 28, 2000.

Today we are discussing the Fiscal Year 2001 (FY'01) budget request of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). The Subcommittee has jurisdiction over the fisheries, marine affairs, and oceanography programs of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This includes primarily programs conducted by the National Ocean Service, the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, and the National Marine Fisheries Service -- NOAA's wet programs.

For the last several years, our annual budget hearings have focused on the need for additional resources in NOAA's wet programs. I am pleased to see that significant additional resources are requested this year for these programs. I am particularly pleased to note increases within the National Ocean Service in Navigation Services, Coastal Zone Management, and National Marine Sanctuaries.

Also of particular note is the Administration request for Sea Grant. For the first time in nearly two decades, the Administration seeks a small increase, rather than a significant decrease, in the program. I was also pleased to see that NOAA is seeking additional funds for the LEO-15 project, and I will strongly support that request.

I would also like to commend you for providing an increase in Acquisition of Data funds for the National Ocean Service (NOS). This is an area that has been repeatedly underfunded, not only in NOS but also in OAR and NMFS. To carry out your agency's science, hydrographic and management programs, your employees, grantees and contractors must be able to go to sea. They cannot do this without adequate funds. I hope the increase in funds for NOS is the beginning of a long-term solution to this problem.

While I have always been a supporter of the National Marine Fisheries Service's budget, I am again concerned that the Administration has not requested funding for the striped bass/bluefish studies or for the Atlantic herring and mackerel line item. These are important programs to the East Coast, and I am surprised that the agency has not requested funding for either of these programs.

This budget is an improvement over previous years for NOAA's wet programs although there are still some shortfalls, like OAR and Ocean and Great Lakes Programs, that need to be addressed.

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