

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Capitol Building, H-218
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Obey
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Science, State, Commerce,
Justice, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Capitol Building, H-309
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Science, State, Commerce,
Justice, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
1015 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Sirs:

As co-chairs of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative, representing the members of the congressionally-mandated U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the Pew Oceans Commission, we are writing to express our grave concern with the funding level for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) provided in the FY 2007 Science, State, Justice and Commerce appropriation bill (H.R.5672).

We recognize the difficult budget environment facing the nation and the hard funding decisions Appropriations Committee members faced in developing HR 5672. While we applaud the support provided to ocean-related research and education programs within the National Science Foundation and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, we were very disturbed to see the significant funding cuts proposed for NOAA in FY 2007.

The Committee's mark provides \$3.4 billion for NOAA, which is \$289 million below the President's request and \$508 million below the FY 2006 enacted level, compounding the funding reductions incurred by the agency in FY 2006. The proposed funding cuts are being imposed at a time when there is clear recognition of the growing number and severity of problems that are compromising the health and associated economic benefits generated by our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. Last year economic and human health impacts were associated with major harmful algal blooms that impacted the East Coast, West Coast, and Gulf of Mexico, as well as tens of thousands of beach closures and advisories due to water pollution. Poor coastal land use planning and the loss of habitat contributed significantly to the losses associated with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Inadequate research and monitoring are limiting our capacity to understand, predict, and mitigate these and many other problems plaguing our oceans.

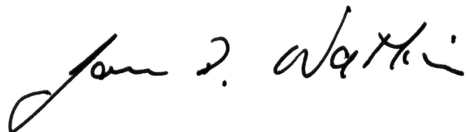
The House cut to NOAA's funding comes at a time when there is growing awareness and support for ocean-related programs and activities. The President has taken the admirable step of establishing a Committee on Ocean Policy within the Executive Office and developed an Ocean

Action Plan, following up these commitments by requesting additional funding for NOAA. A number of states and regions have established councils or regional bodies to coordinate ocean-related activities, and are increasing their collaboration with federal agencies. This is a very encouraging trend that is already generating benefits, but is threatened by proposed decreases in federal ocean-related funding.

We, along with many others in the ocean community, remain very concerned that base funding for NOAA's core ocean programs is eroding as the need for investment in marine science and operations grows. We are hopeful that the House will be able to restore funding for NOAA during floor deliberations on HR 5672, and that there will be a concerted effort to fully fund the agency when the House and Senate negotiate on the final spending bill.

We appreciate your support for ocean science, management, and education and are available to assist in efforts to implement the recommendations of the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative and our two Commissions. Please contact Laura Cantral at 202-354-6444 if you require additional information or assistance.

Sincerely,



James D. Watkins
Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired)
Chairman, U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy



The Honorable Leon E. Panetta
Chair, Pew Oceans Commission