

February 23, 2015

The Honorable John Culberson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman and Mr. Fattah:

California has the largest ocean economy in the United States in terms of both jobs and gross state product, valued at more than \$40 billion per year. Our coastal and ocean resources support jobs and diverse economic activities ranging from commercial fishing to a multibillion dollar tourist industry, as well as providing habitat to countless aquatic species that depend upon a healthy environment. Protecting our ocean and coastal resources not only benefits our natural resources, our ecosystems, and human health, but it is a critical factor for our nation's thriving economy. Californians have taken responsibility for ocean and coastal protection seriously for decades. This is a responsibility that we share with states along the West Coast and with the federal government.

California continues to lead the nation in safeguarding the Pacific Ocean through the California Ocean Protection Council, which has invested nearly \$100 million on innovative projects to protect our ocean and coastal resources and the significant economic benefits that they bring to our nation. California has established a system of marine protected areas developed through one of the most comprehensive science-based, stakeholder-driven processes in the United States. California also works closely with the states of Oregon and Washington to develop regional solutions through the West Coast Governors' Alliance on Ocean Health (WCGA).

As the subcommittee considers Fiscal Year 2016 appropriations for Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, I urge the you to consider the following requests for funding for several programs important to California's – and the nation's – ocean and coastal resources.

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Coastal Management Grants

The coast and ocean are arguably two of the most iconic and precious resources in California. As such, many cities, state parks, and urban areas are located in a coastal setting and require substantial management to maintain the integrity of our resources. California's federally recognized coastal management program is made up of three state agencies: the California Coastal Commission, the California Coastal Conservancy, and the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC). There is a very strong collaboration between federal and state agencies in California working to improve coastal resources and support local communities to prepare for the impacts of climate change. The funding provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) grants is more than matched by California's coastal agencies each year to support infrastructure, resilience, and various other projects crucial for sustainable coastal management.

With climate change affecting sea-level rise as well as increasing storm frequency and intensity, it is crucial to proactively support investments to increase resilience of coastal areas. Extreme weather events, coastal inundation, saltwater intrusion, and other climate hazards create several aspects to threats that will affect the over 1,100 mile coastline of California.

We urge you to fund the Coastal Zone Management Grants within the NOAA budget consistent with the President's request of \$116 million for Fiscal Year 2016. This increase in funding will continue and enhance support for collaboration among state, federal, and local entities to address this urgent issue and to support regional approaches that leverage existing resources and efforts and promote collaboration across jurisdictions and sectors.

Ocean Observation

With rising seas, damaging extreme storms, frequent algal blooms, diminishing fish stocks, increasing ocean acidification and spreading dead zones, the need for the US Integrated Ocean Observing System has long been recognized. California's regional IOOS systems, SCCOOS and CeNCOOS, collect and disseminate the information needed to address these challenges, allowing for effective and efficient response to hazardous spills, safe and efficient marine commerce, targeted search and rescue operations, and monitoring of water quality and long-term ecosystem changes. In 2005, California invested more than \$21 million to design and build a real-time monitoring system of ocean currents that are operated as part of the state's regional IOOS systems. This investment in the land-based high-frequency radar (HFR) surface current mapping system has made California a leader on the national stage of ocean observing. We ask you to provide \$34.5 million for IOOS in fiscal year 2016. This amount includes funding to the continued operation of the national HFR surface current mapping network. This request goes beyond the President's request, but the increased level of competitive funding will enable the continued operation of the nation's eleven regional IOOS systems, including SCCOOS and CeNCOOS in California.

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Ocean Acidification

We support the President's request of \$30 million for a significantly expanded ocean acidification research program in the Fiscal Year 2016 NOAA budget. The oceans are getting more acidic as they absorb carbon dioxide from human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation. This fundamental change in ocean chemistry is already having serious impacts on marine ecosystems and industry, and these impacts are expected to lead to irreversible losses to our region's commercial, recreational and culturally important marine resources. In the face of this threat, California has joined hands with Oregon and Washington State to protect fishermen, shellfish farmers, ecosystems and coastal communities. Our efforts have catalyzed action and raised awareness of the potential impacts of ocean acidification, providing unprecedented collaboration, including the following:

The West Coast Ocean Acidification & Hypoxia Science Panel, an interdisciplinary collaboration of leading scientists from the three states and British Columbia that is working to frame these complex issues for decision-makers; The West Coast Governors Alliance on Ocean Health, the regional ocean partnership for the U.S. West Coast has identified ocean acidification as one of four priority areas, and is working with the West Coast Coastal and Ocean Observing Systems to bolster the systems' efforts to collaborate on data collection and dissemination; The Pacific Coast Collaborative, comprised of California, Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, signed the Pacific Coast Action Plan on Climate and Energy citing ocean acidification as a priority ocean health issue; and California Current Acidification Network (C-CAN), comprised of stakeholders, decision-makers, and scientists, promotes and encourages academic collaboration and communication more broadly.

While we are taking vigorous actions to understand and address acidification, the scope of the challenge merits increasing federal investment in monitoring, research and coordination. This threat will require state, regional, federal and international cooperation on an unprecedented scale.

Marine Debris

Marine debris is a global problem that affects the environment, human safety, and commerce. The NOAA Marine Debris Program plays a pivotal role in addressing this issue through research, prevention, reduction, and education, and we fully support continued level funding at approximately \$6 million. The NOAA Marine Debris Program works collaboratively with numerous California state agencies and organizations to meet the challenges and complexities surrounding the issue of marine debris on a local, statewide, and global scale. NOAA funding will also continue to support critical nationwide, competitive grant funding opportunities for innovative marine debris projects and the Marine Debris Coordinating Committee, a multi-agency body responsible for streamlining the federal government's efforts to address marine debris. With the help of NOAA's support and on-going collaborations, California is well positioned to continue to spearhead efforts to reduce marine debris and ensure a safe and clean coastline.

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Climate Impacts on Fisheries and Coastal Communities

The state of California is very supportive of the increased efforts by NOAA to provide critical science to help answer questions and plan for climate change. As the ocean warms, there will be significant impacts to California's marine resources and the communities that depend on them. The need for advancing the science that will enable communities to plan for and respond to events such as drought and migrating fish stocks is critical. There is much at risk; in 2012, U.S. fisheries generated \$1.7 million jobs and \$199 billion in revenue.

We support funding identified in the President's Fiscal Year 2016 proposal that provides NOAA Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research \$5.5 million to award competitive grants for research that improves understanding of the impacts of climate variability and change on fish stocks, prey availability, and habitat. This research investment will develop valuable information, decision-support tools, and training to build capacity for the integration of climate information into fisheries management. Enhancing early-warning and management of the impacts of climate variability and change will help minimize economic disruption for the many communities, citizens, and livelihoods across the Nation that depends on healthy fisheries.

Further, we urge the subcommittee to support the increase of \$5 million to the NOAA budget for a joint initiative between the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the National Ocean Service (NOS) that will promote understanding of the importance of coastal habitats to the productivity and recovery of fisheries and protected species. Additionally, this innovative program will assist coastal communities with incorporating green infrastructure into hazard mitigation, resilient coastal development, and post-event rebuilding decisions. This program will deliver actionable information to support regional- and community-level planning that incorporates both the technical ingenuity of built infrastructure and the sustainable, protective capacity of ecosystem-based infrastructure solutions.

Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund

Congress established the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) to protect, restore, and conserve Pacific salmon and steelhead populations and their habitats. Since that time the PCSRF has helped improve the status of ESA listed species and has reduced the likelihood of extinctions. California recommends that Congress appropriate \$65 million in NOAA's Ocean and Atmospheric Research program to continue prior funding appropriated for this successful regional effort. Salmon and steelhead populations aided through the PCSRF are supporting jobs and providing economic benefits that will help achieve the overarching goal of full recovery and sustainability. The President's 2016 proposal requests \$50 million, a \$15 million reduction from last year's approved funding levels. PCSRF funding has faced significant annual cuts in recent years, after receiving an average of over \$80 million per year during the past decade.

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Thank you for your consideration of these ocean and coastal resources requests for the fiscal year 2016 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Laird". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

John Laird
Secretary for Natural Resources
State of California

cc: Members of the California Congressional Delegation