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Testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on

Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies

Honorable Jimmy Panetta CA-20

February 28, 2017

Although new to Congress, I keenly understand the importance of the Appropriations Committee's annual check on our nation's priorities. I am grateful to appear before you today to talk about the important National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) programs that promote stewardship for our nation's marine resources.

I represent the Central Coast of California, and a coastline that is the most magnificent meeting of land and water in the world. In my congressional district, we are blessed to have the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary that protects 276 miles of shoreline and reaches a depth of 12,713 feet down the Monterey Bay Canyon. The Sanctuary is considered the "Serengeti of the Sea" because of its 34 species of marine mammals, over 500 species of fish, and more than 180 species of seabirds and shorebirds.

Managed by NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, our nation's 13 sanctuaries and two marine national monuments spur economic growth and generate approximately \$8 billion for local economies. Funds for Marine Sanctuaries provide public access for research,

exploration, education and ocean tourism. I am respectfully requesting \$65.5M for Fiscal Year 18 for the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. Specifically, within the account I urge \$57M to the Sanctuaries and Marine Protected Areas, and \$8.5M to the Marine Sanctuaries Construction program. This is an investment in our largest natural resource -- the ocean -- that provides food, medicine, employment, scientific research and national security.

NOAA's Education Program, Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) is an environmental education program that promotes authentic experimental learning for K-12 audiences in their nearby watersheds. This program utilizes local STEM professionals as guests for classrooms; while providing professional development to educators to enhance their skills in environmental education.

Over the last 5 years, dozens of programs in my district have received B-WET funding. With grants as small as \$20,000, environmental educators expose a diverse group of K-12 students to the importance of diverse watersheds, basic scientific research methods and environmental stewardship. I respectfully request the subcommittee to allocate \$20M for B-WET in FY18.

The Fisheries Data Collections, Surveys, and Assessments program supports the eight Regional Fishery Management Councils that develop and enforce management plans, conduct data collection, fish stock assessments and national fish surveys. This information is used by the eight Regional Councils, NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service, and the three Interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions. The Councils rely on these fishery surveys to determine annual

catch limits for the fishery management plans and to monitor the health of fish stocks. I respectfully request \$164.7M for FY18.

Although fishing regulations set forth by the Regional Councils are meant to prevent depleted U.S. fish stocks, the United States imports 90% of its seafood. Some of this seafood may be obtained by illegal overseas fishing activities such as mislabeling products and over treating products with water-retaining chemicals. Funds designated to the Observers and Training program within Fisheries Science and Management, would support operations that inspect and enforce import restrictions on illegally harvested and improperly-documented seafood and marine resources. Training is necessary to conduct audits on incoming seafood deliveries and enhance overall seafood traceability. In order to support these operations, I request \$45.5M be appropriated to the Observers and Training programs.

I strongly urge this subcommittee to invest in our nation's largest natural resource. It is important that we not only protect our oceans for recreation but for our \$282 billion blue economy. These programs help educate our youth, protect the seafood that reaches our tables, preserve the marine environment, and employ thousands of Americans along the coast. Thank you for your consideration in these crucial programs.