

## **Rep. Jared Huffman Opening Statement**

Good morning. Thank you for joining us today to examine President Trump's budget proposal for the Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The Committee has many concerns regarding the President's budget proposal. The President has made clear in this and past budgets that he does not value oceans, wildlife, or the communities who depend on healthy ecosystems. This budget proposes deep cuts to science and conservation that would significantly hinder the ability of both the Fish and Wildlife Service and NOAA to make informed management decisions. Specifically, it proposes reducing funding for each agency by nearly 16 percent - for Fish and Wildlife that's a 250-million-dollar cut, and for NOAA, a nearly one-billion-dollar cut. While the President touts his dedication to growing the economy and creating jobs, the reality is that this budget proposal would be truly devastating to Americans whose livelihoods depend on coastal, ocean, and wildlife resources.

I expect that some on this Committee will applaud the budget cuts and call them fiscally wise. But reducing funding for science, wildlife, and communities working to increase their resiliency in the face of climate change isn't wise. It's just passing the buck to our kids and grandkids who will have to pay for these shortsighted, irresponsible decisions down the road. If we want to support jobs and economies for future generations, we must sustainably manage our resources using the best available science. Unfortunately, it's clear from the proposed budget that this administration does not see a need to invest in critical science and research programs that are necessary to inform resource management decisions.

For example, last year, commercial and recreational fisheries supported 1.7 million jobs in America and generated over 200 billion dollars in revenue. However, with the President's proposed budget cuts of 100 million dollars to the National Marine Fisheries Service, the agency will struggle to enforce existing regulations, collect critical scientific data, and sustainably manage our fisheries.

The National Marine Fisheries Service is already functioning on limited resources, and further underfunding the agency will only harm American fishermen, whether it's fishermen struggling because of Trump's reckless trade wars or those enduring multiple fishery disasters like in my district. Tribes and commercial fishermen went through major disasters in 2015 and 2016 but are

still facing severe economic hardship because they haven't seen a dime of funding relief. It's been caught up in administrative red tape. Waiting over four years for disaster relief is unacceptable and I hope to get some answers today from NOAA as to why this process has taken so long.

We are also at a point where climate change is a reality for Americans across the country. The time to act is now. We need to dedicate significantly more resources to supporting coastal communities that are facing sea level rise and to making our oceans and coasts more resilient. Many of the programs that the Administration describes as "low priority" are crucial in supporting coastal communities across the nation and preparing them for the impacts of climate change, including National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science, Sea Grant, the Coastal Zone Management Program, and Title IX [*NINE*] funds. The Administration has proposed to eliminate all of these programs.

And as the climate continues to change, conservation of imperiled wildlife is only going to be more challenging. The President's budget states that recovering species listed under the Endangered Species Act is a priority of the Administration. The proposed budget, however, includes nothing to reflect this sentiment. The Administration continues to severely underfund ESA programs, making it impossible for agencies to meet recovery targets and provide necessary protections for imperiled species.

In addition to proposed budget cuts, the administration is rolling out new rules to significantly erode the ESA, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act is under attack, and efforts to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to drilling have rapidly increased.

The President's budget, and many of the actions of both NOAA and the Fish and Wildlife Service, are simply giveaways to special interests. At this point, it comes as no surprise that the Administration is not looking out for our coastal and recreational economies, or for conservation and wildlife protection. Instead, the Administration has made it clear that their industry-friendly policies are meant to benefit oil and gas companies, not the rest of America.

Today we have with us Rear Admiral Tim Gallaudet from NOAA and Margaret Everson from the Fish and Wildlife Service. These budget hearings are an important part of the democratic process and the cooperation of the Administration is essential. We have a lot of questions

regarding the agencies' priorities and agenda, and I hope that the witnesses will answer our questions honestly and directly.

I would like to invite the Ranking Member to say a few remarks, and then we will welcome and hear testimony from our witnesses.