

**House Natural Resources - Water, Wildlife and Fisheries Subcommittee
May 16, 2024 Oversight Hearing: *President's FY25 Budget Proposal for NOAA*
Questions for the Record Submitted to the Honorable Dr. Richard Spinrad**

Questions from Rep. Dingell

- 1. Dr. Spinrad, the President's budget only proposes \$10 million for the Integrated Ocean Observing System which is a 76 percent reduction from fiscal years 2023 and 2024. I'm concerned this cut would drastically affect the IOOS's ability to work with its regional partners like the Great Lakes Observing System to generate and deliver continuous data on our coastal waters, oceans, and Great Lakes. Dr. Spinrad, do you share these concerns, and can you elaborate on how you arrived at this funding level?**

NOAA Response:

Due to the ceiling set by the Fiscal Responsibility Act and competing Administration priorities, NOAA had to make some difficult decisions, including to prioritize the sustainment of existing federal programs over external grant funding lines. We recognize that a reduction of this scale would present significant challenges to the IOOS regional coastal ocean observing system. At this funding level, we ensured the program maintains the ability to prioritize the integration of federal, academic, private sector and non-profit ocean data through the IOOS national Data Management and Cyberinfrastructure (DMAC) as well as make that data accessible. Furthermore, as you are aware, NOAA was a major recipient of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) supplemental funding, of which IOOS received a large portion. As this funding will be available through FY 2026, NOAA will work closely with the IOOS Regional Associations to execute IRA and BIL funds in ways that will alleviate the impacts of these base funding reductions, though it will come at a loss to scope of what we hope to achieve with these funds.

- 2. Great Lakes researchers heavily rely on their partnership and use of the NOAA research vessel the Laurentian (Laur-en-chent) to better understand our Great Lakes, but the vessel is currently 50 years old. Dr. Spinrad, given its age and how important the work this vessel does, are there any plans in place to replace it?**

NOAA Response:

We agree with the Congresswoman's remarks on the importance of this vessel. NOAA's vital role in researching, monitoring, and restoring the waters and coastlines of the economically important but ecologically fragile Great Lakes relies heavily upon Laurentian operations. As the only NOAA research vessel permanently homeported in the Great Lakes that is capable of extended scientific cruises, the Laurentian's capacity for long-term physical, biogeochemical, and ecological monitoring and research is key to fulfilling national obligations, such as those laid out in the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement, the 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty, the Council of Great Lakes Fishery Agencies Joint Strategic Plan, the Vessel Incidental Discharge Act, and the Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Act. While NOAA's Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory (GLERL) has other small day boats capable of fulfilling certain limited mission requirements, the Laurentian is the only NOAA vessel with the capacity sufficient for the multiple scientists, educators, and onboard laboratory essentials necessary to completely and comprehensively support all mission requirements.

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GLERL is currently conducting an exercise to determine its research vessel needs.