



April 17, 2025

Honorable Rick Scott  
110 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Scott:

On behalf of the members of the Tampa Bay Pilot Association I would like to express our concern about the potential loss of multiple critical NOAA services due to budgetary and personnel cutbacks currently taking place at the Federal level. The specific NOAA services that we rely on routinely are as follows:

- PORTS Tampa Bay Wave Buoy – This buoy is funded by ACOE's Coastal Data Information Program (CDIP) and it is critical for safe navigation during heavy weather events and for efficient vessel scheduling before and after those weather events.
- NOAA Integrated Ocean Observing System buoys– Four buoys funded by the Integrated Ocean Observing System regional association (SECOORA) on West Florida Shelf are critical for safe navigation and monitoring weather events. These buoys provide critical sea state information to vessels transiting the Gulf.
- NOAA National Weather Service – Navigating the narrow 70+ mile channels of Tampa Bay in ever changing weather conditions requires real-time, accurate weather forecasts which we currently receive from the Ruskin NWS. Loss or limitations to this critical service would increase the risk of weather-related vessel casualties and/or require additional safe handling guidelines that would impede commercial vessel transits.
- NOAA PORTS Tampa Bay – Since its inception the PORTS system has significantly decreased vessel groundings and enabled Pilots to efficiently move vessels utilizing real-time tide, wind, current, wave and visibility data. The loss of PORTS would decrease vessel movement efficiencies and increase the risk of vessel groundings.
- NOAA Coastal Surveying and Mapping – Having accurate hydrographic survey information of areas within Tampa Bay and the coastal vicinity is critical knowledge during vessel casualty events requiring anchorage locations and any time a vessel must operate outside of an ACOE navigable channel. Loss of this information would limit options for safe operation outside of those channels.

1825 Sahlman Drive • Tampa, FL 33605  
P: 813-247-3737 • F: 813-247-4425  
[www.tampabaypilots.com](http://www.tampabaypilots.com)



- Pre hurricane planning – Accurate storm forecasting and modelling cannot be understated as related to port operations. The ability to plan and prepare saves lives (mariners included), protects infrastructure and results in a quicker post storm recovery. A loss of this service would be detrimental in many areas of maritime operations.
- Post hurricane response – Following the 2024 storms Helene and Milton the timely surveying response and support from NOAA was paramount in our ability to safely commence vessel movements within 36 hours of the passing of both storms. The survey data provided was detailed and accurate and provided the confidence needed to quickly return to normal commercial operations.

In summary we are hopeful that the NOAA IOOS, NOAA NWS, and ACOE services that we rely on to safely navigate the channels of Tampa Bay will remain intact and receive the necessary funding to continue to operate at the high standards we are currently accustomed to.

Sincerely,

Terry W. Fluke  
Executive Director



April 17, 2025

Honorable Ashley Moody  
B40-B Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Moody:

On behalf of the members of the Tampa Bay Pilot Association I would like to express our concern about the potential loss of multiple critical NOAA services due to budgetary and personnel cutbacks currently taking place at the Federal level. The specific NOAA services that we rely on routinely are as follows:

- PORTS Tampa Bay Wave Buoy – This buoy is funded by ACOE's Coastal Data Information Program (CDIP) and it is critical for safe navigation during heavy weather events and for efficient vessel scheduling before and after those weather events.
- NOAA Integrated Ocean Observing System buoys– Four buoys funded by the Integrated Ocean Observing System regional association (SECOORA) on West Florida Shelf are critical for safe navigation and monitoring weather events. These buoys provide critical sea state information to vessels transiting the Gulf.
- NOAA National Weather Service – Navigating the narrow 70+ mile channels of Tampa Bay in ever changing weather conditions requires real-time, accurate weather forecasts which we currently receive from the Ruskin NWS. Loss or limitations to this critical service would increase the risk of weather-related vessel casualties and/or require additional safe handling guidelines that would impede commercial vessel transits.
- NOAA PORTS Tampa Bay – Since its inception the PORTS system has significantly decreased vessel groundings and enabled Pilots to efficiently move vessels utilizing real-time tide, wind, current, wave and visibility data. The loss of PORTS would decrease vessel movement efficiencies and increase the risk of vessel groundings.
- NOAA Coastal Surveying and Mapping – Having accurate hydrographic survey information of areas within Tampa Bay and the coastal vicinity is critical knowledge during vessel casualty events requiring anchorage locations and any time a vessel must operate outside of an ACOE navigable channel. Loss of this information would limit options for safe operation outside of those channels.

1825 Sahlman Drive • Tampa, FL 33605  
P: 813-247-3737 • F: 813-247-4425  
[www.tampabaypilots.com](http://www.tampabaypilots.com)



- Pre hurricane planning – Accurate storm forecasting and modelling cannot be understated as related to port operations. The ability to plan and prepare saves lives (mariners included), protects infrastructure and results in a quicker post storm recovery. A loss of this service would be detrimental in many areas of maritime operations.
- Post hurricane response – Following the 2024 storms Helene and Milton the timely surveying response and support from NOAA was paramount in our ability to safely commence vessel movements within 36 hours of the passing of both storms. The survey data provided was detailed and accurate and provided the confidence needed to quickly return to normal commercial operations.

In summary we are hopeful that the NOAA IOOS, NOAA NWS, and ACOE services that we rely on to safely navigate the channels of Tampa Bay will remain intact and receive the necessary funding to continue to operate at the high standards we are currently accustomed to.

Sincerely,

Terry W. Fluke  
Executive Director



April 17, 2025

Representative Kathy Caster  
2188 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Caster:

On behalf of the members of the Tampa Bay Pilot Association I would like to express our concern about the potential loss of multiple critical NOAA services due to budgetary and personnel cutbacks currently taking place at the Federal level. The specific NOAA services that we rely on routinely are as follows:

- PORTS Tampa Bay Wave Buoy – This buoy is funded by ACOE's Coastal Data Information Program (CDIP) and it is critical for safe navigation during heavy weather events and for efficient vessel scheduling before and after those weather events.
- NOAA Integrated Ocean Observing System buoys– Four buoys funded by the Integrated Ocean Observing System regional association (SECOORA) on West Florida Shelf are critical for safe navigation and monitoring weather events. These buoys provide critical sea state information to vessels transiting the Gulf.
- NOAA National Weather Service – Navigating the narrow 70+ mile channels of Tampa Bay in ever changing weather conditions requires real-time, accurate weather forecasts which we currently receive from the Ruskin NWS. Loss or limitations to this critical service would increase the risk of weather-related vessel casualties and/or require additional safe handling guidelines that would impede commercial vessel transits.
- NOAA PORTS Tampa Bay – Since its inception the PORTS system has significantly decreased vessel groundings and enabled Pilots to efficiently move vessels utilizing real-time tide, wind, current, wave and visibility data. The loss of PORTS would decrease vessel movement efficiencies and increase the risk of vessel groundings.
- NOAA Coastal Surveying and Mapping – Having accurate hydrographic survey information of areas within Tampa Bay and the coastal vicinity is critical knowledge during vessel casualty events requiring anchorage locations and any time a vessel must operate outside of an ACOE navigable channel. Loss of this information would limit options for safe operation outside of those channels.

1825 Sahlman Drive • Tampa, FL 33605  
P: 813-247-3737 • F: 813-247-4425  
[www.tampabaypilots.com](http://www.tampabaypilots.com)



- Pre hurricane planning – Accurate storm forecasting and modelling cannot be understated as related to port operations. The ability to plan and prepare saves lives (mariners included), protects infrastructure and results in a quicker post storm recovery. A loss of this service would be detrimental in many areas of maritime operations.
- Post hurricane response – Following the 2024 storms Helene and Milton the timely surveying response and support from NOAA was paramount in our ability to safely commence vessel movements within 36 hours of the passing of both storms. The survey data provided was detailed and accurate and provided the confidence needed to quickly return to normal commercial operations.

In summary we are hopeful that the NOAA IOOS, NOAA NWS, and ACOE services that we rely on to safely navigate the channels of Tampa Bay will remain intact and receive the necessary funding to continue to operate at the high standards we are currently accustomed to.

Sincerely,

Terry W. Fluke  
Executive Director





April 17, 2025

Representative Anna Luna  
226 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Luna:

On behalf of the members of the Tampa Bay Pilot Association I would like to express our concern about the potential loss of multiple critical NOAA services due to budgetary and personnel cutbacks currently taking place at the Federal level. The specific NOAA services that we rely on routinely are as follows:

- PORTS Tampa Bay Wave Buoy – This buoy is funded by ACOE's Coastal Data Information Program (CDIP) and it is critical for safe navigation during heavy weather events and for efficient vessel scheduling before and after those weather events.
- NOAA Integrated Ocean Observing System buoys– Four buoys funded by the Integrated Ocean Observing System regional association (SECOORA) on West Florida Shelf are critical for safe navigation and monitoring weather events. These buoys provide critical sea state information to vessels transiting the Gulf.
- NOAA National Weather Service – Navigating the narrow 70+ mile channels of Tampa Bay in ever changing weather conditions requires real-time, accurate weather forecasts which we currently receive from the Ruskin NWS. Loss or limitations to this critical service would increase the risk of weather-related vessel casualties and/or require additional safe handling guidelines that would impede commercial vessel transits.
- NOAA PORTS Tampa Bay – Since its inception the PORTS system has significantly decreased vessel groundings and enabled Pilots to efficiently move vessels utilizing real-time tide, wind, current, wave and visibility data. The loss of PORTS would decrease vessel movement efficiencies and increase the risk of vessel groundings.
- NOAA Coastal Surveying and Mapping – Having accurate hydrographic survey information of areas within Tampa Bay and the coastal vicinity is critical knowledge during vessel casualty events requiring anchorage locations and any time a vessel must operate outside of an ACOE navigable channel. Loss of this information would limit options for safe operation outside of those channels.

1825 Sahlman Drive • Tampa, FL 33605  
P: 813-247-3737 • F: 813-247-4425  
[www.tampabaypilots.com](http://www.tampabaypilots.com)



- Pre hurricane planning – Accurate storm forecasting and modelling cannot be understated as related to port operations. The ability to plan and prepare saves lives (mariners included), protects infrastructure and results in a quicker post storm recovery. A loss of this service would be detrimental in many areas of maritime operations.
- Post hurricane response – Following the 2024 storms Helene and Milton the timely surveying response and support from NOAA was paramount in our ability to safely commence vessel movements within 36 hours of the passing of both storms. The survey data provided was detailed and accurate and provided the confidence needed to quickly return to normal commercial operations.

In summary we are hopeful that the NOAA IOOS, NOAA NWS, and ACOE services that we rely on to safely navigate the channels of Tampa Bay will remain intact and receive the necessary funding to continue to operate at the high standards we are currently accustomed to.

Sincerely,

Terry W. Fluke  
Executive Director