



COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
REPUBLICANS Frank Lucas, Ranking Member

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Frank Lucas

Joint Research & Technology and Environment Subcommittee Hearing *Calm Before the Storm: Reauthorizing the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program*

December 4, 2019

Good afternoon Chairwoman Stevens. I would like to thank you and Chairwoman Fletcher for holding this joint hearing today on the National Windstorm Impact Reduction Program (NWIRP).

As a son of Oklahoma, where - the wind comes sweepin' down the plain - efforts to reduce the loss of life and property from windstorms is of extreme importance to my family, friends, and neighbors. Oklahoma is part of an area of the midwest called "tornado alley." Over the past 10 years, tornados have caused an average financial loss of over \$10 billion per year.

This May, a four-day tornado outbreak produced 190 tornados, impacting states across the Rockies, Midwest and Northeast – from Colorado to Oklahoma and all the way to New Jersey. The estimated cost of this outbreak was \$3.2 billion.

Each year, lives are lost and billions are spent recovering from the destruction caused by tornadoes, hurricanes and other windstorms. And the costs associated with windstorms are increasing.

NWIRP helps provide coordination between federal government agencies, universities, industry, and local and state governments. This cooperation is needed to meet the great challenge of responding to windstorms.

It is important we continue to support the federal research done through NWIRP to improve our understanding of windstorms, their impacts, and to develop enhanced mitigation measures.

For example, through NWIRP, NIST is supporting researchers from the University of Oklahoma who are developing maps of damaging winds using data collected from integrated remote and on-site observations. These observations will provide high resolution data in time and space, providing for improved real-time forecasting.

NSF and NOAA are also working the University of Oklahoma on the TORUS project. The project involves more than 50 researchers and students using different tools to measure the atmosphere, including unmanned aircraft systems, mobile radars and NOAA's "Hurricane Hunter" aircraft.

After 32 days on the road, traveling more than 9,000 miles, researchers encountered 19 supercell storms, with eight of those storms producing tornadoes. Researchers expect results from the TORUS project to be groundbreaking.

The insights gained will improve our understanding of why some supercells create tornadoes and others do not, leading to improved forecasting.

The project is also offering hands-on training in the field for the future workforce. Students taking part in this project will give us better knowledge of windstorms and develop the next generation of applications for reducing future losses. I look forward to what they discover in the 2020 storm season and beyond.

This research is important, but it is also key that we find practical and effective applications for this research, so that it reaches those who need it most – states and local communities.

I understand this is a challenge, but I look forward to hearing today how NWIRP is working to tackle it and to better prepare our nation for windstorms.

I would like to thank our witnesses for coming today to share their expertise on the challenges, and hopefully successes, of reducing windstorm impacts.

Thank you and I yield back the balance of my time.

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