



## **Opening Statement of Ranking Member Stephanie Bice**

Environment Subcommittee Hearing – Advancing Earth System Science and Stewardship at NOAA  
*September 23, 2021*

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Thank you, Chairwoman Sherrill, for holding this hearing today. I also want to welcome Administrator Spinrad and thank him for his time today. Although we've had some great Acting Administrators at NOAA, it's been a few years since we've had a confirmed Administrator. So I want to congratulate you, Dr. Spinrad, and I look forward to working together.

Last year, there were twenty-two weather, water, and climatic disasters in the United States that exceeded \$1 billion in losses. Communities around the country have struggled through the effects of extreme events, including hurricanes, floods, droughts, and wildfires.

And no one knows the lasting consequences of severe weather better than my constituents in Oklahoma, the very heart of Tornado Alley. Violent tornados, as well as hailstorms and large thunderstorms, can pop up quickly, leaving just minutes for people to find safety. While natural disasters can be devastating and life altering, the data, tools, and services NOAA provides can equip all Americans with better access to more timely warnings and support. The never-ending goal is to protect all lives and property.

While weather forecasting and observations might be the most widely known output, NOAA has a wide-ranging mission, from fisheries management to atmospheric observation. These products and services have a tremendous economic impact and affect more than one-third of America's gross domestic product. The President's Fiscal Year 2022 budget request for NOAA was \$6.98 billion, a 28 percent increase from last year's enacted funding. With such a large increase proposed, I look forward to hearing from Administrator Spinrad on what his priorities are for the agency.

While I'm certainly not opposed to investing in NOAA's life-saving products, we must ensure that the Administration is adequately prepared to handle an increased budget. This includes expedited hiring, upgrading infrastructure, ramping up new research projects, and a variety of other issue. A lump sum of money with no strings attached can be a curse before it is a blessing. Therefore, priorities must be set, and decisions must be made.

When it comes to the specifics of the budget request, I was disappointed to see it did not include any details regarding the Earth Prediction Innovation Center, or EPIC.

This Committee has had multiple hearings on EPIC and its timely implementation has been a priority for Members on both sides of the aisle. It's a project that is absolutely critical to reclaiming and maintaining international leadership in Numerical Weather Prediction. However, I was pleased to see NOAA's focus on increasing their high-performance computing capabilities. Last year, one of NOAA's systems, Hera, was ranked number 88 on the Top 500 list of fastest supercomputers in the world. A continued emphasis on computing will accelerate the development of weather modeling across NOAA and the National Weather Service. This, in turn, will improve the prediction of high-impact weather events and evaluate potential future directions for models and data assimilation. I hope to hear more on how NOAA can collaborate with other agencies, including the Department of Energy, which houses three of the top five fastest supercomputers in the world. Cross agency collaboration, especially with an agency that is the clear subject matter expert, is the most efficient use of taxpayer money and we should encourage it as much as possible.

Lastly, I look forward to discussing how NOAA will leverage existing centers and scientific expertise to inspire and support the next generation of STEM students. Oklahoma is proud to house a key component of NOAA's infrastructure, the National Weather Center. The work conducted at this center provides life and property saving services for the entire country. But in order to attract and keep the next generation of talent filling that center, we must ensure that our buildings, instruments, and entire infrastructure are world class. The meteorologists, oceanographers, biologists, and other researchers shouldn't have to settle for outdated buildings and cramped laboratories.

Every Member of this Committee has priorities for their district and I'm sure Administrator Spinrad has priorities of his own. I'm excited to hear how NOAA plans to balance these and how we in Congress can help maximize our return on investment.

Again, I want to thank Administrator Spinrad for testifying before the Committee today and I look forward to an engaging discussion. I yield back the balance of my time.