



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, & TECHNOLOGY

Opening Statement

Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-TX)

Subcommittee on Environment Hearing:
Advancing Earth System Science and Stewardship at NOAA
September 23, 2021

Good morning. I would like to give a warm welcome to our witness, NOAA Administrator Dr. Richard Spinrad. He is testifying before the Committee for the first time since he officially took the helm of the agency.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration plays a critical role in protecting American lives, property, and economic prosperity. NOAA is a unique agency that performs cutting edge science, but also provides critical environmental service and stewardship. By looking at the Earth as a system, we are better able to understand how the weather, ocean, climate, and atmosphere interact. Based on that understanding, NOAA provides essential services and products that serve us all.

Recently, Americans have experienced an unprecedented string of natural disasters made worse by climate change. We've seen extreme heat and drought conditions out West that set the stage for this record-breaking wildfire season.

Last month, Hurricane Ida rapidly intensified in the Gulf of Mexico before making landfall, due to warmer water temperatures.

In addition, warmer atmospheric conditions brought heavy precipitation leading to extraordinary flooding along the Gulf Coast and all the way up to New England. This one devastating storm killed dozens and left countless others with their property destroyed. Each year seems to have more multi-billion-dollar weather and climate disasters than the previous.

NOAA's scientific observations, predictions, and warnings have always been vital to Americans across the country. But they are becoming increasingly important for helping Americans prepare for extreme events exacerbated by climate change. This Committee is steadfast in supporting NOAA as the authoritative source for weather and climate information. I am glad Chairwoman Sherrill spoke to the importance of this in her remarks.

This Committee has worked in a bipartisan fashion to authorize R&D activities that help reduce our emissions and mitigate climate change. NOAA's weather and climate programs also play an important role in addressing the climate crisis. NOAA data can be used to inform adaptation and resilience decisions at a community level. NOAA's scientists contribute to major climate reports

that influence policy around the world, including the National Climate Assessments and the IPCC assessment reports.

It is reassuring to see the President elevate the importance of NOAA within his Administration. We have the first Senate-confirmed Administrator in over four years, who is also eminently qualified. The Administration has significantly increased its budget request for NOAA. NOAA also has a seat on multiple White House-level interagency working groups tackling our most pressing climate issues.

I look forward to hearing from Administrator Spinrad today about his goals to advance NOAA's mission of science, service, and stewardship. NOAA has an important role to play in addressing the climate crisis, and we are fortunate to have an experienced leader like Administrator Spinrad to guide the agency.

In closing, I again want to welcome you to the Committee, Administrator Spinrad.

I hope this will be the first of many positive interactions you have with this Committee. With that, I yield back the balance of my time.