



Opening Statement of Chairman Frank Lucas

Environment Subcommittee Hearing

*An Overview of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Budget Proposal
for Fiscal Year 2024*

May 11, 2023

I want to extend my warmest welcome to Administrator Spinrad. It's good to see you again.

When you were in front of the Committee for the first time as Administrator, I told everyone there's a picture of you in Oklahoma at the dedication of the National Weather Center in 2006. Since the Weather Center received \$9.5 million last year for an expansion project, which we can discuss more today, I hope to see you in Norman, Oklahoma very soon for a similar celebration and picture.

While we're only five months into this Congress, today's hearing is already our third involving NOAA-related activities. That goes to show you how much this Committee, and I personally, value and appreciate NOAA's role in the federal research ecosystem.

While the previous two hearings have focused on the Committee's future legislative efforts – a NOAA Organic Act and reauthorizing the Weather Act – I hope that today's hearing will focus more on current activities and the appropriate funding levels for certain programs. Before we move forward with any legislative changes, we need to understand what's already happening—examining what's working and what isn't.

When it comes to the President's budget request, I've said many times over many years that this is just that— a request. Congress controls the purse, and you are here to make the case for your vision of NOAA. We'll see where we agree and where we need to work out some differences, but I promise you, we'll get there.

NOAA is requesting \$6.8 billion for a broad array of activities ranging from weather forecasting and climate prediction to ocean and atmospheric observation. While I don't doubt the need for these activities – I've personally advocated for legislation requiring some of them – it's important to put it into context: this would be an annual budget \$1.4 billion more than what NOAA was operating with just five years ago.

That is quick growth for any agency, especially for one that at times has struggled with workforce recruitment and retention. So while I respect many of NOAA's goals, and understand that funding is required to achieve them, we must recognize we are in a time of tough but important conversations. We can't assume an endlessly increasing budget and must be aware of the fact that, to be accountable to taxpayers, even funding increases may come with caveats and reforms.

At the end of the day, all of the activities under NOAA's budget request should have one fundamental end goal: protecting lives and property. Anything else is window dressing. I look forward to working with the Administrator to advance this goal in the best ways possible.