



Opening Statement of Environment Subcommittee Chairman Max Miller

Environment Subcommittee Hearing
An Overview of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Budget Proposal for Fiscal Year 2024

May 11, 2023

Good morning and welcome to our hearing on NOAA's Budget Proposal for Fiscal Year 2024.

I'd like to welcome the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere, or more simply known as the NOAA Administrator, Dr. Rick Spinrad, as our sole witness this morning to discuss the President's proposed budget for the agency.

Economically, we are in an unprecedented time. Everyone might be tired of hearing that word having been used countless times during COVID, but there is no other way to describe the state of our economy right now.

Federal spending is at a record high, while inflation is nowhere near the Fed's 2% target, and prices continue to rise for American families. We are also rapidly approaching the debt limit and the possibility of the federal government defaulting on its debts. All of that to say, any talks around budget and spending, even at an agency like NOAA, warrant careful consideration and calculated decisions.

The President has requested \$6.8 billion for NOAA's budget in FY24, the most in NOAA's history. This request would be a \$407 million increase from the discretionary and mandatory money that NOAA was appropriated last year, and a \$1.3 billion increase from FY22.

It's also worth noting NOAA received an additional \$2.7 billion from the Infrastructure Law that remains available until 2027. NOAA also received one-time influxes of \$3.3 billion in the Inflation Reduction Act and over \$500 million in the FY23 Disaster Supplemental bill.

So with some quick, back of the napkin math, we can see that NOAA has an additional \$8 billion that they didn't have just two years ago, and likely didn't prepare for. That is a staggering number and prime for waste, fraud, and abuse without proper oversight.

As I have already mentioned, our current economic outlook clearly tells us that federal spending isn't sustainable. I'm not placing the blame on NOAA, nor am I advocating for drastic cuts at the agency.

I'm simply opening an honest and upfront dialogue about what is critically necessary and what is a luxury. We can't act like NOAA's coffers are dry. We need to shift from the "give me more" mindset to "maximize what we've been given."

As the budget request accurately describes, NOAA provides the environmental science, information, and services needed to protect lives, lifestyles, and livelihoods for all Americans. Therefore, when making any budget decision we should be asking: does this program, activity, or funding protect lives and property?

I'm pleased to see manageable increases to NOAA's Oceanic and Atmospheric Research and the National Weather Service. These two offices are at the forefront of innovation and prediction that can indeed save lives.

On the other hand, I'm perplexed to see a decrease in funding for the National Mesonet Program and a long-term plan to flat fund Commercial Data Purchases in the future.

These two programs are golden examples of how NOAA can supplement and even improve their weather data inventory with cheaper, flexible industry efforts. If we're looking to save taxpayer money, it seems logical to bolster these programs rather than have NOAA try to collect data on their own through expensive buildouts and federally owned instruments.

Nonetheless I remain optimistic about NOAA's future. I have no doubt Administrator Spinrad had tough conversations of his own in developing this budget. I'm confident we can talk civilly through any differences in opinion we have, and work together to best advance NOAA's mission.

I look forward to hearing from Administrator Spinrad today and in the future as we look together to support NOAA's lifesaving activities.