



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 2025

June 4, 2024

Good morning, and welcome to our hearing on NOAA's Budget Proposal for Fiscal Year 2025.

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

This conversation comes at an especially difficult time for our economy. People across our country are struggling to pay more for just about everything. Since President Biden was inaugurated in January 2021, the food price index has increased by 21%, and the energy price index has increased by 41%. Rising costs are unchecked.

Additionally, federal spending is at a record high, while the increasing national debt is projected to slow economic growth and suppress the growth of Americans' household income over time. 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 \$6.5 billion for NOAA's FY25 budget. This would be a \$242 million increase from the total appropriations that NOAA received in FY24.

It's worth noting that NOAA received an additional \$2.6 billion in discretionary appropriations from the Infrastructure Law, which 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.

NOAA has billions of dollars that it didn't have just a few years ago. As is the case with so many other agencies, it's been a difficult adjustment for NOAA to responsibly spend all this money, and exceedingly hard for us in Congress to determine how much of it has made it out the door.

Any successful business knows exactly how much money it has before seeking a loan for more. NOAA should strive to do the same and detail specific spending plans for their billions of dollars before seeking additional increases. We need to shift from the "we need more" mindset to "maximize what we've been given."

As I mentioned, our current economic outlook clearly tells us that current federal spending isn't sustainable. I'm not placing the blame on NOAA, nor am I advocating for drastic cuts at the agency – too many hard-working Americans rely on the data they provide on a daily basis. But an honest conversation is needed about funding priorities.

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

I'm pleased to see the budget includes manageable increases for the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations and the National Weather Service. These two offices are at the forefront of innovation and extreme weather prediction that can indeed save lives. My home state of Ohio has faced countless tornadoes this year, and because of early warning systems and accurate predictions, the loss of life has been minimal.

Yet, I'm discouraged by the proposal to significantly decrease the budget of the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research. This office is developing our next-generation radar, supporting technology transfers to commercialize federal research, and funding the 16 Cooperative Institutes, which consist of 80 universities. Cutting funding in this office means cutting our investment in the future and accurate weather forecasting.

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

I look forward to hearing from the Administrator as we look to support NOAA's lifesaving activities.