



Chairman Matt Cartwright
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies
Increasing Risks of Climate Change and NOAA's Role in Providing Climate Services
April 15, 2021

Good morning. For the first time in the 117th Congress, this subcommittee welcomes representatives from the Department of Commerce, in this case from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, or NOAA.

With us today are Steve Volz and Nicole LeBeouf. Dr. Volz is an Assistant Administrator for NOAA who oversees the National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service. He is also currently performing the duties of the Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction. I'm told that was a very long-winded way of saying that you're NOAA's satellite guy.

Thank you for being here, Dr. Volz.

And Nicole LeBeouf, who currently serves as Acting Assistant Administrator for NOAA, overseeing the National Ocean Service. Welcome, Ms. LeBeouf.

It is increasingly clear that the issue of climate change is no longer one that we can talk about in reference to something our children or grandchildren will have to address. It is here now, and it is happening to us.

We are all witnessing these impacts, ranging from the horrifying wildfires out West, to the tornadoes and severe storms in the Midwest, and increasingly in the South, to the hurricanes in the Southeast and Gulf Coast.

We are seeing more frequent flooding throughout the country, including in my Northeastern Pennsylvania district.

This past year the United States saw a record 22 distinct severe weather events that cost over \$1 billion dollars each in damages, beating the previous high by six events. The ice sheets in Greenland and the Antarctic have lost over 11 trillion tons of ice in just the last 25 years.

Global sea level has risen about 8 inches in the last century and the rate is accelerating each year. And the five warmest years on record are the last five years.

My district in Northeastern Pennsylvania is no stranger to the struggle against climate change. After Tropical Storm Agnes devastated the Wyoming Valley in 1972, the city of Wilkes-Barre added to their levees that now reach 44 feet high; however, the Susquehanna River nearly topped them setting a record and reaching nearly 43 feet in 2011 as a result of Tropical Storm Lee.

This was an extremely close call for the city, and very well may cost our residents thousands of dollars in additional flood insurance as the definition of a 100 year event changes along with the climate. We need to be doing more to address the increasing risk our communities are facing.

These data and stories all paint a bleak picture of the outlook we face as we look to adapt our society to our new climate reality. And as we sit here today, Congress is looking to make investments in infrastructure, and to do so intelligently. Infrastructure planning decisions, especially at the local level, increasingly rely on high-quality, credible climate information.

That's where NOAA comes in. I'm looking forward to exploring how our climate system is changing, the threats we face, and how you deliver this critical climate information to decision makers at all levels of government as well as at private businesses and for individual citizens.

The federal government must have the tools and resources it needs to further our understanding of the changing climate and to inform the American people about the corresponding risks so that we can prepare and respond accordingly. It is my intention as Chairman that the CJS subcommittee will help lead the way in this effort.

Dr. Volz and Mrs. LeBeouf, it is a privilege to have you join us for this important discussion and to learn from your expertise on this subject.