NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION
WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

OVERSIGHT HEARING
ON
THE NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

BEFORE THE
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Introduction

Greetings Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Meng, and members of the Subcommittee. I am Taylor Jordan, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Environmental Observation and Prediction at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). On behalf of the agency and Administrator Dr. Neil Jacobs, I offer our most sincere thanks for the Subcommittee's longstanding support for our agency and its programs. In particular, I offer appreciation for the recently passed Fiscal Year 2026 (FY 2026) appropriations. This funding not only enables NOAA to execute its mission of environmental science, service, and stewardship, it also supports the advancement of our life saving public safety mission and support of national security for the country.

NOAA's National Weather Service

My focus today is NOAA's National Weather Service (NWS) and its mission to provide environmental data, forecasts, warnings, and impact-based decision support services (IDSS) to the American people for the protection of life and property, and the enhancement of the national economy. NOAA is transforming NWS to ensure our products and resources are aligned with our partners' needs and expectations, and we deliver critical decision support that decision makers and emergency managers require in order to understand and mitigate weather risks. We are streamlining functions and leveraging technology to increase productivity and ensure we are delivering optimum results. I will highlight just a few of these efforts here.

2025 Accomplishments

Throughout 2025 and into this year, NOAA has undertaken significant steps to transform NWS. Specifically, NWS has modernized our weather alert systems by transferring the

NOAA Weather Radio All-Hazards broadcast transmitter network to 4G wireless technology and away from analog copper lines, improving reliability and eliminating approximately $12 million per year in maintenance cost increases.

In addition, NOAA has embraced the utility of artificial intelligence (AI) and recently announced the launch of a new suite of operational, AI-driven global weather prediction models. These new models mark a significant advancement in forecast speed, efficiency, and accuracy, providing forecasters with faster, more accurate guidance while using a fraction of computational resources. This effort also includes a pioneering, hybrid "grand ensemble" that combines the new AI-based ensemble with NOAA's flagship model, the Global Ensemble Forecast System. NOAA is the first organization in the world to implement such a hybrid physical-AI ensemble system. This hybrid model also arms forecasters with probabilistic guidance which in turn helps decision makers understand risk, uncertainty, and confidence leading to improved outcomes.

Furthermore, NWS continues to expand its flood inundation mapping technology across the United States. As of early 2026, this real-time technology provides flood mapping for approximately 60% of the U.S. population, allowing emergency managers and the public to access and view near real-time inundation maps that provide neighborhood level actionable information for where and when flood waters are forecast. We expect to expand this groundbreaking technology to nearly 100% of Americans, including Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the most flood-impacted parts of Alaska by October of this year. These advancements will help the NWS provide IDSS for emergency and water resource managers to prepare, mitigate, and respond to flood impacts in the United States and territories.

2026 Priorities

In FY 2026, NWS is supporting the continuation of our transformation efforts and make meaningful progress toward leading the world in numerical weather prediction. To that end, NOAA is prioritizing the development and implementation of a cloud-based successor to the legacy Advanced Weather Interactive Processing System (AWIPS), a system critical to the NWS mission delivery. Leveraging funding included in the Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2025 (P.L. 118-158), NWS recently awarded contracts to develop and implement the new cloud-based application and data environments. Resilient and reliable infrastructure is the foundation of NWS' transformation efforts, and these investments will give forecasters efficient, secure remote access to the system to provide on-site IDSS wherever and whenever severe weather threatens. A new nimble, flexible, and mobile Weather Service needs its operations to match.

In 2026, we look to expand upon this transformation by updating the core physics in our next-generation modeling architecture. A new dynamical core to NOAA's weather model - supported by the broader weather enterprise - provides the path toward global convection-allowing forecasting. This will enable high-resolution modeling across the globe and is critical to NOAA's efforts to advance U.S. numerical weather prediction leadership.

Key to our advancements in accurate and timely weather forecasts, NWS will continue to support the Commercial Data Program, which includes the National Mesonet Program and the Aircraft Based Observations Program, and provides the NWS with valuable observational data from external partners. The National Mesonet Program will continue as the NWS' primary program for purchasing non-Federal data from a variety of observing networks across the United States. We are also acquiring data through the Aircraft Based Observations program, which procures wind and temperature profiles and is one of the most important sources of observations for numerical weather prediction. These data fill gaps within the core federal observing systems, enabling improved forecast modeling as well as many additional real-time, "nowcast" validation points for NWS forecasters to confirm their active forecasts and warning.

In addition, NWS is working on its Radar Next Program which will design and deploy the next generation of weather surveillance radar technology. The current radar system, known as NEXRAD, is an important source of data used by weather forecasters and will need to be recapitalized in the coming years. This new generation of weather radars will ensure continuity of operations, while also reviewing potential solutions to expand coverage, and improve performance, enabling forecasters to improve the lead times and the accuracy of warnings for high-impact weather events. NWS is working to complete an Analysis of Alternatives, including an examination of technologies and the diversity of possible architectures for Radar Next, in order to replace NEXRAD within the next 10 years.

NWS Transformation & Reorganization

With these new technologies and infrastructure to support them, the NWS is poised to transform into the Weather Service of the future. Nimble - in order to quickly shift operations postures to support its partners how and when they need it. Flexible - to provide its data and products how and where their users need them. Mobile - to enable forecasters to access data and products from anywhere and co-locate with emergency officials to provide direct support as they need it. When severe weather threatens, emergency officials need to trust our forecasts and the people that are providing them. Working side-by-side as needed and providing support every day will lead to quicker and more accurate decisions from our partners when the weather inevitably requires it.

NWS is also taking steps to implement the reorganization transmitted to Congress last month in order to better support the needs of our Nation. This work incorporates long-standing recommendations from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the National Academies, Congress, internal reviews, and feedback from the workforce calling for modernization, improved service delivery, and more efficient operations. The reorganization will streamline operations, promote accountability, reduce bureaucracy, and enhance efficiency. We aim to speed up decision-making and execution while strengthening our collaboration with the weather and water enterprise. These changes will allow the NWS to focus on mandatory and statutory mission-critical support functions: establishing a tightly integrated organization with a singular mission focus - to better serve the American People.

We look forward to your continued support and partnership as we work to sustain NWS' ability to meet its Primary Mission Essential Functions. Through this work, we are improving operations while building long-term resilience and transforming into a more nimble, flexible, and mobile agency. As we make these improvements, NWS will better align with our partner's needs and expectations, serve our public with the most accurate and timely weather forecasts and warnings, and be able to quickly adapt and adjust to ensure we are at our best when impactful weather threatens the Nation.