

April 26, 2017

The Honorable John Culberson
Chairman
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable José Serrano
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Culberson, and Ranking Member Serrano,

The Consortium of Aquatic Scientific Societies (CASS) is comprised of six professional societies representing diverse knowledge of the aquatic sciences. CASS members include the: American Fisheries Society, Association for the Sciences of Limnology and Oceanography, Coastal and Estuarine Research Federation, Phycological Society of America, Society for Freshwater Science, and Society of Wetland Scientists. Our collective membership totals almost 20,000 individuals that span the private sector, academia, non-governmental organizations, and various tribal, state, and federal agencies. The CASS organizations represent professionals who combine deep subject-matter expertise, a commitment to independent objectivity, and the critical review of environmental information, along with a passion for the natural places and resources that form the foundation of American greatness. We support the development and use of the best available science to sustainably manage our freshwater, estuarine, coastal, and ocean resources to the benefit of the U.S. economy, environment, and public health and safety.

CASS writes in strong support of the **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)** programs that support the research, conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of aquatic ecosystems required by all U.S. citizens, who rely on clean and abundant water for their health and well-being. On March 16, the Trump Administration released a budget blueprint that identified drastic cuts to NOAA that would eliminate many critical programs that support sustainable use and economic development of our coasts and oceans. We urge you to reject these recommendations and instead provide your full support to NOAA and its aquatic science and management programs, specifically the following:

- **National Sea Grant College Program:** The National Sea Grant College Program is a joint federal-state investment that supports the health and resilience of the Nation's coastal communities (including the Great Lakes, Gulf of Mexico, and communities on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts), yielding quantifiable economic, social, and environmental

benefits at the national, regional, state, and local levels. Sea Grant has been in existence for 50 years within NOAA and provides unique services that are identified as critical by public and private sector constituents and our nation's coastal communities. Sea Grant has been a highly successful example of an effective federal-state-private partnership. The Sea Grant federal model sends 95% of its appropriated funds to coastal states through a competitive process to solve problems. This is done through the establishment of efficient, cost-effective partnerships between state universities, NOAA, coastal communities and industry – who all share in the costs of solutions – resulting in a leveraging of nearly \$3 for every \$1 appropriated by Congress. Sea Grant provides invaluable support to coastal communities through its extension, education, and research activities that promote sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, resilient communities and economies, healthy coastal ecosystems, and environmental literacy and workforce development.

- **National Estuarine Research Reserve System:** The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) is a network of 29 coastal sites designated to protect and study estuarine systems. NERRS serve as living laboratories, a touchstone where scientists, stakeholders, and decision-makers can connect to address issues facing their coast. Reserve sites leverage as much as \$1.5 million additional funds, and work with diverse partners to balance conservation with economic development, plan for changing sea levels and storm surge, protect nursery habitat for fisheries, manage hazardous spills, and arm the next generation with tools and science to meet future challenges. NERRS serves a critical role in weaving coastal science and restoration efforts together; they are where science touches down as place-based, non-regulatory, and community-oriented. Reducing funding for NERRS would directly impact communities by reducing services to the states and municipalities, and would reduce national products used to improve coastal resiliency.

CASS recognizes that the Appropriations Committees face difficult decisions given fiscal constraints; we support NOAA and the programs listed above because they are vital to our Nation's economic and environmental well-being, and are an efficient and effective use of funds appropriated by the federal government. They support a clean and adequate water supply, sustainable fish populations for food and recreation, natural and human communities that are resilient to hazards and changing climates, healthy and diverse aquatic ecosystems, and abundant outdoor recreation opportunities that protect America's conservation heritage and provide enormous economic and cultural benefit. The federal funding provides an enormous return on investment that sustains and creates jobs and protects lives and natural resources.

We agree with the committee's view, as stated in the report to FY 2017 Appropriations bill H.R. 5393, that NOAA's collaborations with academia and private sector "build broad community engagement, leverage external funding for mission-oriented research, strengthen the science within NOAA, and advance scientific knowledge." The programs mentioned above are stellar examples of how much can be achieved through leveraging with a relatively small federal investment. We hope the Committee will continue its history of supporting these programs.

Respectfully,

Joe Margraf
President, American Fisheries Society

Tim Nelson
President, Phycological Society of America

Emily Bernhardt
President, Society for Freshwater Science

Robert R. Twilley
President, Coastal and Estuarine Research
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Linda Duguay
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