

## Proposed NOAA Climate Service

### *Witnesses*

#### **Dr. Jane Lubchenco**

Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

#### **Robert Winokur**

Deputy Oceanographer, U.S. Department of the Navy

### *Members Present*

Ralph Hall, Chair (R-TX)

Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member (D-TX)

Jerry McNerney (D-CA)

Federica Wilson (D-FL)

David Wu (D-OR)

Sandy Adams (R-FL)

Andy Harris (R-MD)

Ben Quayle (R-AZ)

Terri Sewell (D-AL)

Steven Palazzo (R-MS)

Paul Broun (R-GA)

Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA)

John Sarbanes (D-MD)

Brad Miller (D-NC)

Marcia Fudge (D-OH)

The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology held a full committee hearing to discuss the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association's (NOAA) proposal to create a new climate service within NOAA. In his opening statement, Chairman Hall (TX-R) raised concerns about the creation of a climate service. "My objection to this proposal has been the concern that the focus to create a climate service will severely harm vital research at NOAA by transferring resources away from fundamental science to mission-oriented research and service-driven products. This hearing is only the first step in the Committee's examination of NOAA's proposed Climate Service," he said. Hall additionally raised concerns regarding the lack of timeliness and consideration for the committee on behalf of NOAA; outstanding questions from a hearing on March 10 remain.

In her testimony and during questioning, Administrator Jane Lubchenco of NOAA explained the need for NOAA to reorganize itself and create the Climate Service office. She explained the importance of climate studies, citing uses such as knowing where to build homes and where to plant certain crops. Climate studies also allow the American public to prepare for droughts and floods. Lubchenco stressed that "science is the foundation of all that we do." She stated that a climate service would remain science based, minimize disruptions as information is transferred, and provide better climate services to the public or private customers. The Climate Service office would house both the science and service aspect of climate in the same entity, she said. Lubchenco felt that the creation of the Service would allow for greater collaboration with non-agency scientists as NOAA's climate services would be in one place in the organization.

In his testimony and questioning, Robert Winokur of the Navy stated the importance of climate information for naval operations. He cited such uses as planning exercises, search and rescue operations, and routing long distance flights. Additionally, he mentioned the importance of climate data for estimating heating and cooling costs. Winokur's main concern for the Navy is that it should have a single entry data point for climate services. When questioned by Sandy Adams (R-FL) regarding this, Winokur stated that currently the Navy must go through various branches and departments within NOAA to acquire the necessary information. He noted the benefit of having a single entity to facilitate the acquisition of data and ultimately facilitate national defense.

The committee held several concerns regard the restructuring of NOAA, one of which was the fear of politicizing NOAA's mission. Andy Harris (R-MD), raised concern about the scientific validity of an article published on March 10, 2011 on NOAA's Climate Portal. The article was first published in the December 2010 issue of the Chesapeake Quarterly. According to Harris, the article raised concerns about rising sea levels in the Chesapeake Bay, yet it did not mention land subsidence as an additional factor to sea level rise. Lubchenco argued that the Climate Service office would not diminish the quality of caliber of science done within NOAA.

Paul Broun (R-GA) questioned the need for the Climate Service office. He believes the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) already in place within NOAA achieves what what are the proposed service's goals. Lubchenco countered the argument by stating that the CPC alone cannot do what needs to be done. The proposed Climate Service is in response to the increased demands and requests for climatological information. Lubchenco stated that the Climate Service is a "win-win" for the American public. Additionally, she stressed the extensive research NOAA has done in how to best steward taxpayer's dollars, while addressing the increasing demands for climate services and climate sciences. She stated that no single line office has lead the effort to create the Climate Service and that NOAA as a whole supports the proposal.

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