

Published on *American Geosciences Institute* (<https://www.americangeosciences.org>)

Home > House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee
Hearing on proposed NOAA FY 2016 Budget

House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Hearing on proposed NOAA FY 2016 Budget

Witness:

The Honorable Dr. Kathryn Sullivan
Administrator of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Members:

John Culberson (R-TX), Chairman
Chaka Fattah (D-PA), Ranking Member
Derek Kilmer (D-WA)
David Jolly (R-FL)
Jaime Herrera Beutler (R-WA)
Martha Roby (R-AL)

March 18, 2015

On March 18, The House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee met to discuss the Presidents fiscal year (FY) 2016 budget for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The Honorable Dr. Kathryn Sullivan, Administrator of NOAA, answered representatives' questions about various NOAA satellite projects, tsunami buoys, and coastal resilience.

Subcommittee Chairman John Culberson (R-TX) and Ranking Member Chaka Fattah (D-PA) both asked about the potential weather satellite coverage gap leading up to the launch and calibration of the Joint Polar Satellite System (JPSS). Dr. Sullivan testified that NOAA has done its utmost to mitigate the potential gap, looking for alternative sources of short-fill temporary data to cover the time before JPSS will be able to take over transmitting weather data. JPSS is on track to launch in January 2017, and NOAA anticipates a gap of between 12 and 42 months where satellite weather data may be limited. Dr. Sullivan verified that increased funding would not speed up this process. The method that NOAA has used to purchase satellites is not cost efficient and sets the Administration up for the sort of data gap they are now facing with JPSS, Dr. Sullivan argued. She highlighted the need for funding for the Polar Follow On program, investing in the next satellites in the JPSS series in order to ensure data continuity and prevent gaps in data.

Sullivan described the operation of NOAA's Deep-ocean Assessment and Reporting of Tsunamis (DART) buoys, as well as the requirements for servicing and maintaining the network, which is now up to its target of having 80 percent of the buoys functional. Dr. Sullivan explained the importance of NOAA's ocean vessels in servicing the tsunami warning buoys and emphasized the importance of the FY 2016 budget request for more vessels because NOAA will have to retire half of its fleet by 2020. Representative Derek Kilmer (D-WA) asked Dr. Sullivan about budget allocations for coastal resiliency. Sullivan explained that NOAA's plans to institute an Americorps-type program to help communities with resiliency were informed by feedback received after Superstorm Sandy.

Dr. Sullivan addressed NOAA projects tracking and researching hurricanes, particularly unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) such as the Coyote unmanned aircraft system and Dropwindsondes, instruments dropped into the center of a storm from above, as well as self-propelled ocean gliders that help scientists better understand the lower part of storms that interact with the Earth's surface. Dr. Sullivan reassured the representatives that NOAA will continue a strong focus on tornado research as well.
