

## OPENING STATEMENT

**The Honorable Andy Harris (R-MD), Chairman**

Subcommittee on Energy and Environment

*An Overview of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency Budgets for Fiscal Year 2013*

March 6, 2012

I want to welcome everyone to this afternoon's hearing to examine the Administration's fiscal year 2013 budgets for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Unfortunately, I have to begin by expressing my extreme disappointment. The President's budget request for the Federal government was released more than three weeks ago. However, NOAA has incredibly still not delivered its budget justification documents to Congress. This Subcommittee oversees NOAA's five billion dollar budget, and has a responsibility to review and react to the details of the President's request. In the absence of budget details, we are simply unable to provide a complete assessment of the request. Last week, the Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science had to cancel its hearing as a result of NOAA's delays. We have chosen to go forward with this hearing due to scheduling constraints, but I must impress upon you Administrator Lubchenco, that this abdication of such a simple responsibility influences the perception on the Hill that the Administration is not being a good steward of taxpayer money.

One of the major themes of the President's FY2013 budget request has been the need to make tough choices. Only in Washington, as we face an unprecedented fiscal train wreck and continue to be forced to borrow 40 cents on the dollar, can a requested budget increase of 3.1 percent for NOAA and 1.4 percent for EPA be characterized as making "tough choices." Even within these requested increases, the Administration is prioritizing its political environmental agendas ahead of the core scientific needs of the nation.

For NOAA, satellites now comprise 40 percent of the total budget request. This is up from 31 percent two years ago. While the Committee applauds the successful launch of the Suomi (Su-ome) NPP satellite, we continue to have grave concerns with the current trajectory of the Joint Polar Satellite System program. Even NOAA's own optimistic schedule of a launch of the next polar satellite in the early part of 2018 – and I say optimistic since it took 18 years to get the first satellite off the ground – still leaves us with a "almost certain" gap in data availability. The limited budget information provided to the Committee thus far provides no indication that NOAA has a plan to develop a solution that ensures continual, high-quality data for weather forecasting. The extreme weather events just last week further highlight the importance of this data to saving lives and property. Further, the delays and cost over-runs so systemic to NOAA's satellite programs is forcing significant reductions in the budget for important activities such as oceans, fisheries, and weather.

Another big winner in NOAA's budget request is climate research. In the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research alone, more than \$212.0 million is allotted for climate research—a 15

percent increase above last year—whereas less than \$70 million is set aside for research in weather and air chemistry. Taken together with the cuts to the National Weather Service, the budget indicates the Administration has prioritized understanding climate conditions decades from now over predicting weather conditions tomorrow. Given the potential for innovations in weather forecasting to greatly aid the economy and save lives and property, the continued prioritization of climate over weather is highly disappointing and should be rejected by Congress.

The Administration's budget request for science and technology activities at EPA is similarly concerning. In a series of hearings on EPA's research activities, this Subcommittee examined in detail the line between politics and science at the Agency. While Administrator Jackson has stated that "Science is the backbone of everything we do at the EPA," it is a very weak backbone struggling to support the enormous weight of the Administration's regulatory ambitions. The Office of Research and Development represents less than seven percent of the \$8.3 billion request for EPA. Instead of conducting fundamental environmental research, the Agency sacrifices sober analysis in favor of the outcome-driven science demanded by the President's anti-energy agenda. All too often, what passes for peer review of Agency science is a rubber stamp by supposedly independent scientific advisors, who also happen to be recipients of EPA's largesse.

The President's focus on climate change and the ongoing effort to find a regulatory angle to restrict the shale gas revolution comes at the expense of worthwhile R&D. EPA is requesting substantial increases for these two areas, including more than \$240 million for duplicative climate change activities and \$14 million for work on hydraulic fracturing of questionable value. Following the sloppy and highly questionable actions of the Agency in investigating water concerns in Pavillion, Wyoming, and Dimock, Pennsylvania, and the inability to follow its own peer review guidelines in the Endangerment Finding on greenhouse gases, I have little confidence in EPA's ability to conduct trusted, quality science in this area, and as such cannot support the significant expansion of hydraulic fracturing research called for in this request. I want to thank the witnesses for appearing before the Subcommittee and I look forward to a constructive discussion.