

OPENING STATEMENT
The Honorable Ralph M. Hall (R-TX), Chairman
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology
Examining NOAA's Climate Service Proposal

June 22, 2011

I want to welcome everyone here today for this hearing on examining NOAA's Climate Service proposal.

I would first like to note my irritation about witness testimony. This Committee has always been very accommodating and appreciative of the busy schedules of our witnesses. That is why we try to give them as much time as possible. The Committee invited NOAA more than three weeks ago. It is truly appalling that this testimony was 26 hours late and is 27 pages.

This lack of consideration of the Committee Member's time is not an encouraging sign that there is a willingness on the part of this witness or of this Administration to work with this Committee on important issues. I am disappointed that we have already started on the wrong foot. Dr. Lubchenco came to my office on November 15th of 2010. I asked her several questions and she said she would seek our approval before implementing her proposal.

The purpose of this hearing is to consider the proposal put forth in the President's FY2012 Budget Request issued in February to reorganize NOAA and create a new line office called the Climate Service.

Though NOAA announced its intent to create this line office in early 2010, this is the first time Congress has had the opportunity to fully examine the implications of transitioning several hundred million dollars of fundamental research into an operations-focused climate office. Over the past 18 months, I have communicated several concerns about this endeavor to the Administrator Lubchenco. My hesitation can be divided into two categories. The first being the process by which this new Climate Service proposal has come into being.

After our budget hearing on March 10th, this Committee sent a series of questions for the record, some of which asked about the Climate Service proposal and would have provided the Committee further information to make today's hearing productive. It has been three months since we sent those questions, and we still have not heard back from NOAA. It is very difficult for the Committee to conduct proper oversight of agencies if they are delinquent – or at best evasive – in responding to Member inquiries. Given that the Administrator has claimed that this topic is a high priority for her, I find it curious that these responses are taking this long to formulate.

The other part of this proposal that I find troubling is the actual substance of NOAA's design for a Climate Service. The foremost concern I have had is regarding the amount of resources NOAA is planning on moving from the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research. More than half the resources of NOAA's research enterprise would be moved into a climate service. This proposal

appears to contradict the notion that fundamental research must not be driven by operational demands.

In 2004, a Research Review Team produced a report for NOAA's Science Advisory Board that proposed consolidating research across NOAA into a more focused and integrated line office in order to enhance cooperation and collaboration to promote research investment in innovation. However, instead of consolidating research activities, NOAA's proposal seeks to break up its research enterprise and move more than half of it into an operational service.

The issue before us today is about the major reorganization of an agency and the impact that such reorganization will have on the functioning of the agency. I recognize that certain climate services can provide value.

For example, the drought forecasts issued by the National Integrated Drought Information System, are very useful to farmers, water planners, and other state and local officials. I have no objection to these types of products, and I hope and expect they will continue to provide value as part of NOAA's existing agency structure.

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.

I now recognize Ranking Member Johnson for five minutes for an opening statement.