



CRS Report for Congress

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): President's Budget Request for FY2009

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Summary

On February 4, 2008, President Bush released his FY2009 budget for the United States government. The President requested \$4.109 billion in discretionary budget authority for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the Department of Commerce. This amount is 0.76% or \$31 million more than the FY2007 appropriation of \$4.078 billion and 5.5% or \$213 million more than FY2008 enacted appropriations of \$3.896 billion. The Bush Administration's high budget priorities for NOAA focus on (1) restoring funding for programs that were flat-funded or cut for FY2008, by reprogramming funding not requested in FY2008; (2) re-capitalizing aging facilities, equipment, vessels, buildings, and other infrastructure; (3) ensuring that NOAA satellite programs are able to meet mission requirements and keep to schedule; and (4) implementing the President's *Ocean Initiative*.

Introduction

The mission of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment and conserve and manage coastal and marine resources to meet the nation's economic, social, and environmental needs.¹ The President's FY2009 request of \$4.109 billion for NOAA is the largest for the Department of Commerce (DOC), in terms of funding, and accounts for nearly 67.4% of DOC's discretionary budget request of \$6.1 billion. FY2009 budget documents indicate that NOAA's share of the entire "Federal Science and Technology Budget" for FY2009 would be \$378 million, or about 0.61% of the \$61.7 billion proposed by the President.²

¹ Department of Commerce, *NOAA, 2009 President's Budget Rollout*, "Protecting Lives and Livelihoods," February 7, 2008. Presentation by Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.), Under Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere, February 7, 2008 (Washington, DC).

² U.S. Office of Management and Budget, *The Budget for Fiscal Year 2009: Analytical Perspectives*, Table 5-2, "Federal Science and Technology Budget" (NOAA), p. 54.

The FY2009 President's Budget

Of the \$4.109 billion the President requested for NOAA for FY2009 (**Table 1**), \$2.831 billion would be for the Operations, Research, and Facilities (ORF) discretionary account; \$1.238 billion for the Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction (PAC) account; and \$39.8 million for NOAA's Other Accounts, which include the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF), the Coastal Zone Management Fund (CZMF), and fishery financing. Additional budget authority (BA), generally requested by the President for NOAA annually, offsets the amount of discretionary funding the agency would require otherwise. For FY2009, the President proposed a transfer of \$79 million in offsetting BA from NOAA's Promote and Develop American Fisheries Products Fund (PDAF) to the ORF account. (Funds available in the PDAF are transferred from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.) Other offsetting BA for the ORF account of \$11 million would be derived (if authorized by Congress) from previous fiscal-year unobligated appropriations. Another \$3 million would be transferred internally from CZMF collections to administer the ORF Coastal Zone Management Program. In addition to the five NOAA budget line offices under ORF, Program Support (PS) is a cross-cutting budget activity which supports agency administration, education, marine services, and the NOAA fleet of marine vessels and aircraft. Details of PS funding are found in **Table 2**.

Table 1. FY2007 and FY2008 Funding and the FY2009 Request
(budget authority in millions of dollars)

NOAA Accounts	FY2007 Enacted ^a	FY2008 Enacted ^a	FY2009 Request ^b	%∇ FY2009 vs Enacted
Operations, Research, and Facilities: NOAA Budget Line Offices				
National Ocean Service (NOS)	459.2	467.9	449.3	(4.0%)
NOAA Fisheries (NMFS)	683.5	708.6	724.2	2.2%
NOAA Research (OAR)	363.5	387.9	372.3	(4.0%)
National Weather Service (NWS)	775.0	805.3	818.8	1.7%
NOAA Satellites (NESDIS)	177.2	179.2	165.3	(7.8%)
Program Support (PS)	362.1	392.4	394.4	0.5%
ORF BA Total^c	2,820.5	2,941.3	2,924.3	(0.6%)
Emergency Supplemental (P.L. 110-28)	170.4	NA	NA	NA
Offsets (PDAF/CZMF transfer/deobligations)	(79.4)	(82.0)	(93.0)	NA
ORF Discretionary	2,911.5	2,859.3	2,831.3	(0.9%)
Procurement, Acquisition, & Construction	1,110.2	979.2	1,238.7	26.5%
Other Accounts/PCSRF/CZMF/Finance	56.6	58.0	39.8	(44.6%)
Total Discretionary Appropriations^d	\$4,078.3	\$3,896.5	\$4,109.8	5.2%

Source: Compiled by CRS from sources as noted below.

Notes: Figures are subject to change.

- a. Joint Explanatory Statement to accompany H.R. 2764, amended (P.L. 110-161), October 16, 2007.
- b. NOAA line office budget request details from NOAA, *FY2009 Budget Summary*, February 4, 2008, available online at [http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~nbo/09bluebook_highlights.html].
- c. The FY2008 ORF total includes a rescission of \$11.3 million in Title VII, P.L. 110-161. It also reflects S.Amdt. 3290 to H.R. 3093, approved October 16, 2007, which transferred \$30 million from NOAA's PAC account to the U.S. Attorneys Office to hire additional prosecutors for offenses relating to the sexual exploitation of children (Sec. 704 of P.L. 109-248).
- d. The FY2007 total includes a rescission for NOAA of \$25 million and an emergency appropriation of \$170.4 million (P.L. 110-128).

NOAA Funding Proposals

Among NOAA's priorities for FY2009, Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher Jr, U.S. Navy (Ret.), Administrator of NOAA, stressed the agency's need to "recapitalize" (invest capital) to address problems with aging equipment, facilities, infrastructure, and marine and aviation vessels. He also noted that "technology refreshment" is needed for some of NOAA's marine vessels and aircraft and as replacements for older environmental sensing instrumentation.³ The Vice Admiral stated that base funding for certain programs and activities at the agency was reduced by Congress in FY2008, and that funding for these programs and activities needed to be restored, especially if the agency were to fund new initiatives. The Administrator also indicated that NOAA would have to absorb increased costs of personnel and inflation of goods and services to maintain operation of NOAA's "Core Mission." As part of the President's *Ocean Initiative*, Lautenbacher discussed funding increases for (1) climate and ocean-related research activities (including drought); (2) marine resources conservation and management to enforce regulations aimed at over-fishing; and (3) critical marine habitat restoration to increase declining fish stocks. He added that other *Ocean Initiative* funding would target coastal research, navigation safety, and deployment of the national Integrated Ocean Observation Network (IOOS).

Specific priorities for NOAA for FY2009, Lautenbacher stated, are as follows.

- Meteorological and climate observation and climate research, including developing and testing of instrumentation for the next generation of geostationary satellites (GOES-R). NOAA is requesting Congress to restore funding cutbacks for the program in FY2008 and an increase of \$242.2 million for FY2009, more than twice the FY2008 appropriation.
- NOAA has requested \$74 million in new funding to restore critical sensors for the polar orbiting satellite program. These are needed to develop and test the National Polar Orbiting Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS) and to meet future challenges of weather forecasting, global climate monitoring, and to ensure continuity and preservation of scientific data. Funding is also requested to test NPOESS ground control systems as part of a near-term NPOESS preparatory project (NPP). Even so, polar satellite programs would be decreased by \$92 million to reflect winding down of the original polar-orbiting satellite series, POES.

³ Ibid.

- The President's FY2009 request for the *Ocean Initiative* included \$49 million in new funding for NOAA, for a total of \$159 million.⁴ Of the total, \$78.3 million is for ocean science and research; \$31.7 million is for protecting and restoring marine coastal areas, including an increase of \$7 million for the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP); and \$48.9 million is for sustainable use of ocean resources and enforcing laws against over-fishing in U.S. waters.
- To enhance the public's understanding of the oceans, as well as that of students at all education levels, NOAA requested an increase of \$7 million for implementation of a national ocean observation network, the Integrated Ocean Observation System (IOOS). Increased funding would advance deployment of IOOS which would operate to assess the state of the oceans. Development of IOOS would also fulfil part of the Ocean Research Priorities Plan Implementation funded at \$10 million.
- Plans are to expand NOAA's National Water Level Observation Network (NWLON) for near-coastal, real-time tide gauge data. Also, the Physical Observation in Real Time System (PORTS) would expand to additional major U.S. ports to serve safe navigation and homeland security needs.
- The President proposed \$2.9 million for a NOAA Weather Radio Improvement Project operated by the National Weather Service (NWS). This funding would assist in modernizing existing forecast dissemination technology and facilitate high impact (storm-based) and geographically targeted forecasts and warnings for those at high risk of being affected.
- An increase of \$5.3 million was requested to assist in implementing technology enhancements and additional instrumentation to support weather forecast modeling at NWS Central Forecast Guidance. Also requested is \$4.3 million for Hurricane Forecasting Modeling as part of the U.S. Weather Research Program.
- Funding of \$40.3 million is requested to construct the Pacific Regional Center facility on Ford Island, near Honolulu, HI that would consolidate scattered NOAA science facilities operating in temporary structures.
- An increase of \$11.2 million for Program Support is requested to refurbish NOAA's Fairbanks, AK Command and Data Acquisition Station (CDAS). As a priority for NOAA, recapitalization of this facility would enable the building of a semi-permanent structure and acquiring equipment upgrades. After major repairs, the original and upgraded facility is expected to continue operating through 2026.

⁴ Hereafter, funding changes reported by NOAA are as compared with the FY2008 request.

- Congress directed NOAA to fund the National Undersea Research Program (NURP) as a separate budget line from Ocean Exploration, under the Ocean, Coastal, and Great Lakes Research Program.⁵
- The President has asked Congress to restore funding for NOAA programs that were cut in favor of “Congressionally Directed Programs” (estimated at \$150.4 million⁶) which the Administration did not request in FY2008.

Table 2. NOAA Program Support (PS) Funding Detailed
(\$ in millions)

PS ACCOUNTS	FY2007 Enacted	FY2008 ^a Enacted	FY2009 Request
OPERATIONS, RESEARCH, AND FACILITIES			
Corporate Services (CS)			
Under Secretary and Associate Offices	26.1	28.8	28.7
Corporate Services and Agency Management	150.5	158.2	162.3
Office of Chief Information Officer	NA	1.0	2.1
Subtotal CS	176.6	188.0	193.1
Educational Programs (ED)	37.5	34.1	16.5
Facilities Management^b	10.8	18.5	24.3
Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO)			
Marine Services ^c	99.3	109.9	113.5
Fleet Planning & Maintenance	15.0	16.8	17.0
Aviation Services	22.9	25.2	30.0
Subtotal OMAO	137.2	151.9	160.5
Total PS ORF	362.1	392.5	394.4
PROCUREMENT, ACQUISITION, AND CONSTRUCTION			
Fleet Replace/Acquisition	61.6	5.3	11.5
Aircraft Replacement	13.5	—	—
IOOS (PAC) ^d	17.7	—	—
PS Construction	19.7	23.2	87.0
Total PS PAC	112.5	28.5	98.5
GRAND TOTAL PS	\$474.6	\$421.0	\$492.9

Source: Compiled by CRS from H.Rept. 110-240 (July 12, 2007); S.Rept. 110-124 on S. 1745 (June 29, 2007); and Joint Explanatory Statement to accompany H.R. 2764, amended (December 16, 2007).

a. P.L. 110-161, Div. B, Title I.

⁵ As indicated in the joint explanatory statement to accompany H.R. 2764, the Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY2008, so as to preserve funding autonomy for NURP.

⁶ Total amount is estimated according to funding reported by conferees in the Joint Explanatory Statement to accompany H.R. 2764 (amended), dated December 16, 2007.

- b. In some congressional bill reports Facilities is considered part of Corporate Services.
- c. Includes \$4 million for NOAA Corps retirement and health care benefits.
- d. In FY2006 Appropriations a PS-PAC budget subactivity was created to fund development of an Integrated Ocean Observation System (IOOS) and that funding level was carried over to FY2007 (P.L. 110-5). For FY2008, funding for IOOS was appropriated in the NOS ORF & PAC budgets, instead.

FY2008 Appropriations for NOAA

The President signed H.R. 2764 amended, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of FY2008, into law on December 26, 2007, as P.L. 110-161. Division B, Title I of the act funded appropriations for DOC, including NOAA. Congress passed H.R. 2764, amended first by the Senate and then by the House, on December 19, 2007. As enacted, the measure was accompanied by a Joint Explanatory Statement that emulated “report language” and contained NOAA funding tables for FY2008.

Congress approved \$3.896 billion in discretionary appropriations for NOAA for FY2008 (**Table I**). This amount included \$2.856 billion for the ORF account, \$979.2 million for the PAC account, and a total of \$71.8 million for NOAA’s Other Accounts, including the PCSRF, CZMF, and fisheries financing. P.L. 110-161 also incorporated a Senate amendment that transferred \$30 million of PAC funding to the Justice Department.⁷ It also included a rescission for NOAA of \$11.37 million.⁸ Additional BA of \$77 million was authorized to be transferred to ORF from the PDAF. The FY2008 enacted appropriation was \$171 million less (almost 4.2% less), than the FY2007 level of \$4.078 billion (including emergency supplemental appropriations).⁹

The House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies held hearings on April 4, 2008 and the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies held hearings on March 13, 2008. NOAA’s Administrator Lautenbacher testified at both hearings on behalf of the agency.

⁷ Joint Explanatory Statement to accompany H.R. 2764 (December 16, 2007).

⁸ The FY2008 ORF total includes a rescission of \$11.3 million in Title VII, P.L. 110-161. It also reflects S.Amdt. 3290 to H.R. 3093, approved October 16, 2007, which transferred \$30 million from NOAA’s PAC account to the U.S. Attorneys Office to hire additional prosecutors for offenses relating to the sexual exploitation of children (Sec. 704 of P.L. 109-248).

⁹ The FY2007 total includes a rescission for NOAA of \$25 million and an emergency appropriation of \$170.4 million (P.L. 110-28).