



CRS Report for Congress

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Budget for FY2009

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Summary

On February 4, 2008, President Bush requested \$4.103 billion in discretionary budget authority for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the Department of Commerce (DOC). This amount is \$207 million, or 5.3%, more than FY2008 enacted appropriations of \$3.896 billion. Bush Administration priorities for the NOAA budget included restoring funding for programs that were flat-funded or cut for FY2008, re-capitalizing aging facilities, equipment, vessels, buildings, and other infrastructure; and ensuring that NOAA satellite programs meet mission requirements and keep to schedule. On June 25, 2007, the House Appropriations Committee reported an amended bill to fund the Departments of Commerce and Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (CJS) for FY2009. The House committee recommended \$4.252 billion for NOAA, which is \$356 million, or 9.1%, more than the FY2008 appropriation and \$149 million, or 3.6%, more than the FY2009 request. On June 19, 2008, the Senate Appropriations Committee reported S. 3182, CJS Appropriations for FY2009, and recommended \$4.446 billion for NOAA. This amount is \$549 million, or 14.2%, more than the FY2008 appropriation, \$193 million, or 4.5%, more than the House committee recommendation, and \$342 million, or 8.3%, more than the FY2009 request.

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 an agency of the Department of Commerce in terms of funding, and accounts for nearly 47% of DOC's discretionary budget request of \$8.721 billion. An FY2009 budget document

¹ U.S. Dept. 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).

indicates that NOAA's share of the President's entire "Federal Science and Technology Budget" for FY2009 would be \$378.0 million, or 0.61%, of the \$61.7 billion proposed.²

The FY2009 President's Budget

Of the \$4.103 billion the President requested for NOAA for FY2009 (**Table 1**), \$2.834 billion would be for the Operations, Research, and Facilities (ORF) discretionary account; \$1.238 billion for the Procurement, Acquisition, and Construction (PAC) account; and \$30.9 million for NOAA's Other Accounts, which includes \$35.0 million for the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF), the Coastal Zone Management Fund (CZMF), and an offset of \$4.0 million from fishery financing. Additional budget authority (BA) would offset the amount of discretionary funding the agency would require otherwise. For FY2009, the President proposed a transfer of \$79.0 million in offsetting BA for ORF from NOAA's Promote and Develop American Fisheries Products Fund (PDAF) the proceeds of which are transferred from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Table 1. FY2008 Appropriations, the FY2009 Request, and Congressional Budget Action
(budget authority in millions of dollars)

NOAA Accounts	FY2008 Enacted ^a	FY2009 Request ^b	House Action ^c	Senate Action ^d
Operations, Research, and Facilities: NOAA Budget Line Offices				
National Ocean Service (NOS)	467.9	449.3	472.2	516.8
NOAA Fisheries (NMFS)	708.6	724.2	744.4	777.3
NOAA Research (OAR)	387.9	372.3	396.3	403.4
National Weather Service (NWS)	805.3	818.8	825.8	847.9
NOAA Satellites (NESDIS)	179.2	165.3	179.2	177.9
Program Support (PS)	392.4	394.4	410.0	426.5
ORF BA Total^e	2,941.3	2,924.3	3,027.9	3,149.8
Offsets (PDAF/CZMF transfer/deobligations)	(82.0)	(93.0)	(45.6)	(97.9)
ORF Discretionary	2,859.3	2,831.3	2,982.3	3,051.9
Procurement, Acquisition, & Construction	979.2	1,238.7	1,212.3	1,258.0
Other Accounts/PCSRF/CZMF/Finance	58.0	39.8	58.0	86.0
Fisheries Disaster Mitigation Fund^e	N/A	N/A	N/A	50.0
Total NOAA Discretionary Appropriations^f	\$3,896.5	\$4,109.8	\$4,252.6	\$4,445.9

Source: Compiled by CRS from sources as noted below.

Notes: Figures are subject to change.

- As reported by the House conferees on H.R. 2764, "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008, Div. B — Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2008, December 26, 2007.
- NOAA line office budget request details are from NOAA, *FY2009 Budget Summary*, February 4, 2008, available online at [http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~nbo/09bluebook_highlights.html].
- A bill as ordered reported by the House Appropriations Committee, June 26, 2008.

² U.S. Office of Management and Budget, Table 5-2, "Federal Science and Technology Budget (NOAA)," *The Budget for Fiscal Year 2009: Analytical Perspectives*, February 2008, p. 54.

- d. S.Rept. 110-397 to accompany S. 3182, *Departments of Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2009*, June 23, 2008.
- e. A new NOAA budget line proposed by the Senate Appropriations Committee (S.Rept. 110-397, June 23, 2008, p. 37).
- f. The FY2008 enacted ORF total includes a rescission of \$11.3 million mandated in Title VII, P.L. 110-161. It also reflects S.Amdt. 3290 to H.R. 3093, approved October 16, 2007, which transferred \$30.0 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).

For FY2009, the President requested that Congress approve other offsetting BA of \$11.0 million for the ORF account from previous fiscal-year unobligated appropriations. Another \$3.0 million in BA would be transferred internally from CZMF collections to ORF for administering the Coastal Zone Management Program. In addition to NOAA's five budget line offices under ORF, Program Support (PS), a cross-cutting budget activity, supports agency administration, education programs, facilities, marine services, and the NOAA fleet of marine vessels and aircraft. Details of PS funding are found in **Table 2**.

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

PS ACCOUNTS	FY2008 ^a Enacted	FY2009 Request	House Action	Senate Action
OPERATIONS, RESEARCH, AND FACILITIES				
Corporate Services (CS)				
Under Secretary and Associate Offices	28.8	28.7	28.7	28.7
Facilities Management ^b	18.5	24.3	29.3	24.3
Corporate Services and Agency Management	158.2	162.3	162.4	162.3
Office of Chief Information Officer (IT)	1.0	2.1	2.1	2.1
Subtotal CS	206.5	217.4	222.5	217.4
Educational Programs (ED)	34.1	16.5	20.5	48.7
Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO)				
Marine Services ^c	109.9	113.5	118.5	113.5
Fleet Planning & Maintenance	16.8	17.0	17.0	17.0
Aviation Services	25.2	30.0	31.5	30.0
Subtotal OMAO	151.9	160.5	167.0	160.5
Total PS ORF	392.5	394.4	410.0	426.6
PROCUREMENT, ACQUISITION, AND CONSTRUCTION				
Fleet Replace/Acquisition	5.3	11.5	11.5	15.4
PS Construction	23.2	87.0	37.9	87.0
Total PS PAC	28.5	98.5	49.4	102.4
GRAND TOTAL PS (ORF + PAC)^d	\$421.0	\$492.9	\$459.4	\$529.0

Source: Compiled by CRS from H.Rept. 110-240 (July 12, 2007); S.Rept. 110-124 on S. 1745 (June 29, 2007); and "Consolidated Appropriations," a joint explanatory statement to accompany H.R. 2764, amended (December 16, 2007).

a. P.L. 110-161, Div. B, Title I, Department of Commerce, NOAA.

b. In some sources Facilities is included as part of Corporate Services.

c. Includes \$4.0 million for NOAA Corps retirement and health care benefits across-the-board.

d. The ORF funding portion of PS is reported in **Table 1**. The PAC portion is part of the PAC total.

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.³ He indicated that "technology refreshment" was needed for some NOAA marine vessels and aircraft by replacing older environmental sensing instrumentation. The Vice Admiral stated that base funding for certain NOAA programs and activities was reduced in FY2008 in favor of "Congressionally Directed Programs" that amounted to \$150.4 million.⁴ He added that this funding needed to be restored if the agency were to fund new initiatives. Lautenbacher also noted that the agency would have to absorb increased costs of personnel and inflation of goods and services to maintain operation of NOAA's "Core Mission." As for the Administration's *Ocean Initiative*, Lautenbacher discussed funding increases for (1) climate and ocean-related research activities (including drought); (2) marine resources conservation and management regulations aimed at over-fishing; and (3) critical marine habitat restoration to increase declining fish stocks. Other funding, he stated, would target coastal research, navigation safety, and the national Integrated Ocean Observation Network (IOOS). Lautenbacher also cited specific priorities for NOAA for FY2009, which include the following:⁵

- Develop and test new technologies to meet future challenges of weather forecasting, global climate monitoring, and continuity of scientific data.
- Develop and test the next-generation geostationary satellites (GOES-R).
- Restore GOES funding cuts and increase the budget by \$242.2 million for FY2009 (to more than double the FY2008 appropriation).
- Provide \$74.0 million to restore critical sensors on the National Polar-orbiting Observation Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS).
- Increase funding to test NPOESS ground control systems as part of the near-term NPOESS preparatory project (NPP).
- Decrease funding for the Polar-orbiting Observational Environmental Satellite (POES) program by \$92.0 million as operations wind down.
- Add \$49.0 million in new funding for the President's *Ocean Initiative* for a total of \$159.0 million for FY2009, including \$78.3 million for ocean science and research; \$31.7 million for protecting and restoring marine coastal areas; \$7.0 million for the Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP); and \$48.9 million for sustainable use of ocean resources and enforcing laws against over-fishing in U.S. waters.
- Increase funding for the Integrated Ocean Observation System (IOOS) by \$7.0 million to develop an educational component as part of National Ocean Research Priorities Plan Implementation.

³ Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., U.S. Navy (Ret.), February 7, 2008, (Washington, DC).

⁴ This amount was estimated according to U.S. House Appropriations Committee Print, "Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008, to accompany H.R. 2764 (amended), Div. B — Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (P.L. 110-16), December 16, 2007."

⁵ Funding changes herein reported by NOAA are as compared with the FY2008 request.

- Expand the National Ocean Service National Water Level Observation Network (NWLON) to augment near-coastal, real-time tide gauge data.
- Site the Physical Observation in Real Time System (PORTS) at more U.S. ports for safe navigation and homeland security needs.
- Provide \$2.9 million for NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) Improvement to modernize forecast dissemination technology and provide high impact, geographically targeted forecasts and warnings for those at most risk.
- Increase by \$5.3 million funds for technology enhancement and advanced instrumentation for Central Forecast Guidance weather modeling.
- Provide the U.S. Weather Research Program \$4.3 million for Hurricane Forecasting Modeling.
- Provide \$40.3 million for construction of the Pacific Regional Center facility on Ford Island, near Honolulu, HI to consolidate scattered NOAA science facilities operating in temporary structures.
- Provide \$11.2 million to refurbish the Fairbanks, AK Command and Data Acquisition Station (CDAS), relocate staff in temporary facilities, add equipment upgrades, and extend operations of the CDAS through 2026.

Congressional Action on Appropriations for NOAA

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008 (P.L. 110-161) approved \$3.896 billion in discretionary funding for NOAA (**Table I**). This amount included \$2.859 billion for the ORF account, \$979.2 million for the PAC account, and a net total of \$58.0 million for NOAA's Other Accounts, including \$67.0 million for the PCSRF, a \$3.0 million internal transfer to ORF from the CZMF, and offsetting BA of \$9.0 million from fisheries financing. Additional BA of \$77.0 million was transferred to ORF from the PDAF. A Senate amendment directed a transfer of \$30.0 million of PAC funding to the Justice Department,⁶ and NOAA received a rescission of \$11.37 million for FY2008.

House Actions. On June 25, 2008, the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies ordered a draft bill reported that recommended \$4.253 billion in discretionary funding for NOAA. Of that amount, \$2.982 billion would be for ORF; \$1.212 billion would be for PAC; and a net total of \$58.0 million for NOAA's Other accounts. Of the (net) \$58.0 million, \$65.0 million would be for the PCSRF, offset by \$4.0 million from the fisheries finance account and \$3.0 million transferred internally to ORF from the CZMF. Still other offsetting BA would include a transfer of \$79.0 million to the ORF account from the PDAF from USDA collections. The House committee also recommended \$11.0 million in offsetting BA for NOAA from previous fiscal-year deobligations. Further action in the House is pending.

Senate Actions. On June 23, 2008, the Senate Appropriations Committee ordered S. 3182 (amended) reported (S.Rept. 110-397). The committee recommended \$4.446 billion for NOAA for FY2009, including \$50.0 million for a new "Fisheries Disaster Protection Fund." Of this total, \$3.052 billion would be for ORF; \$1.258 billion would be for PAC (offset by BA of \$2 million); and a net total of \$86.0 million was proposed for NOAA's Other Accounts. Of this \$86.0 million, \$90.0 million was recommended for

⁶ S.Amdt. 3290 to H.R. 3093, approved October 16, 2007, transferred funding to the U.S. Attorneys Office for offenses relating to the sexual exploitation of children (P.L. 109-248).

the PCSRF; \$3.0 million would be transferred internally from the CZMF to ORF; and \$4.0 million in offsetting BA would be derived from the fisheries financing account. Other offsetting BA of \$77.0 million would be transferred to ORF from the PDAF, and \$5.3 million offsetting BA would be derived from previous fiscal-year deobligations.

Comparison of FY2009 Funding Provisions. In all funding scenarios, the NOAA budget would increase compared with FY2008 appropriations. ORF discretionary funding requested by the President was less than the FY2008 appropriation, however. Funding cuts proposed by the Administration for ORF primarily would affect NOS, OAR, and NESDIS (**Table 1**). The President requested \$35.0 million for the PCSRF, more than a third of the \$90 million recommended by the Senate Appropriations Committee, whereas the House Appropriations Committee recommended \$67.0 million for PCSRF. The House committee recommendation for PAC is less than the FY2009 request owing to a House amendment that would transfer \$32.4 million of PS construction funding to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). The Senate Appropriations Committee had no similar proposal. In general, substantial increases were recommended by the Senate committee for NOAA across-the-board. It stated that much of this increased funding would strengthen national responses to U.S. Joint Ocean Commission findings on ocean policy.⁷ For the GOES program, both House and Senate committees recommended \$520.3 million. Further, each proposed \$288.0 million for the NOAA/DOD/NASA (NPOESS); the President proposed a reduction of \$43.0 million NPOESS from FY2008 appropriated levels. Congressional funding recommendations for NPOESS, when combined with those for NPOESS ground control and data systems, total \$992.6 million, the same amount the Bush Administration requested for these programs overall for FY2009. Also, the President requested, and House and Senate committees recommended, \$65.4 million to manage remaining operations of the Polar-orbiting Earth Observations Satellites (POES) program. The President requested \$60.3 million to construct the Pacific Regional Center, HI as PAC-PS funding for FY2009. The Senate committee recommended \$20.3 million for the Center, while the House committee chairman's amendment reduced an original proposal of \$75.0 million for the Center to \$22.9 million.

⁷U.S. Congress, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on the Departments of Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies, *Departments of Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2009, Report to Accompany S. 3182* (S.Rept. 110-397), June 23, 2008, p. 29, "Joint Ocean Commission Initiative."