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## National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): FY2020 Budget Request and Appropriations

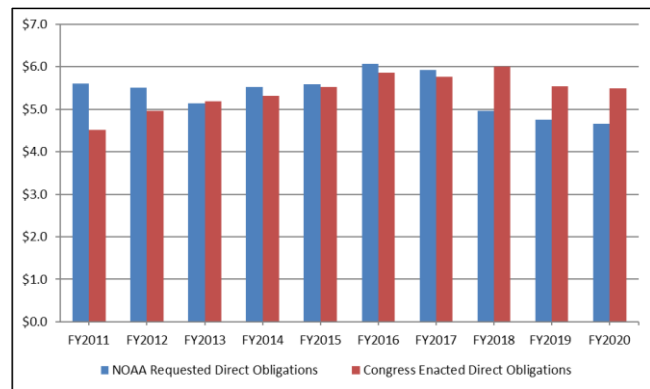
The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) mission is to understand and predict changes in weather, climate, oceans, and coasts; to share that information with others; and to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources. NOAA’s work is divided among six line offices: National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS); National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS); National Ocean Service (NOS); National Weather Service (NWS); Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR); and Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO). NOAA also has an overall Mission Support (MS) office, which provides planning, administrative, financial, information technology, and other services to NOAA’s line offices.

Congress generally funds NOAA, an agency of the Department of Commerce (DOC), in the annual Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations law. Congress provides NOAA with discretionary and mandatory appropriations. Discretionary appropriations support two broad accounts—operations, research, and facilities (ORF) and procurement, acquisition, and construction (PAC)—as well as several relatively small accounts. Mandatory appropriations generally provide a small percentage of total NOAA appropriations and are disbursed to a variety of funds that support programs in NOS, NMFS, and OMAO. This CRS product examines ORF and PAC funding for FY2020 and potential issues for Congress, such as NOAA’s proposed program changes, the agency’s requested changes to the Promote and Develop American Fishery Products & Research Pertaining to American Fisheries Fund, future satellite funding, and the agency’s role in space commerce.

### Recent Funding

The Administration requested a total of \$4.66 billion in discretionary direct obligations for ORF and PAC for FY2020, including \$4.46 billion in appropriations. Direct obligations include appropriations, transfers from NOAA funds, and recoveries of canceled prior-year obligations. Under P.L. 116-93, Congress provided \$5.5 billion in direct obligations to NOAA for FY2020. The enacted FY2020 direct obligations amount is \$836.0 million (18%) more than NOAA’s FY2020 direct obligations request (\$4.66 billion) and \$40.7 million (0.7%) less than the enacted FY2019 direct obligations level (\$5.54 billion). Enacted direct obligations and appropriations for NOAA ORF and PAC have generally increased over the last 10 years, and they peaked in FY2018 (**Figure 1**). Since FY2011, the PAC account has ranged from about 28% to 41% of the total direct obligations.

**Figure 1. NOAA Requested and Enacted Direct Obligations, FY2011–FY2020** (nominal \$ in billions)



**Source:** Congressional Research Service, from NOAA budget justifications and congressional explanatory statements.

**Note:** Amounts do not include supplemental appropriations, rescissions, or sequestration.

### Issues for Congress

According to NOAA’s FY2020 Bluebook, the FY2020 budget supported NOAA’s priorities to (1) reduce the impacts of extreme weather and water events, (2) maximize the economic contributions of ocean and coastal resources, and (3) space innovation.

### Proposed Program Changes

For FY2020, the Administration proposed increases to 22 subactivities totaling over \$80 million, including a requested increase of \$18.5 million in subactivity grants, subsidies, and contributions (GSC; **Table 1**). GSC, according to NOAA, includes grants awarded to nonfederal entities, such as states, universities, and the private sector. NOAA’s FY2020 budget request also proposed the reduction or elimination of 96 subactivities and additional undescribed decreases totaling over \$1 billion (**Table 1**). Of the total, more than \$490.4 million in GSC was proposed to be reduced or eliminated compared to the FY2020 base level. The remaining amount was composed of planned decreases to three satellite programs (\$216.6 million) and proposed reductions and eliminations to advisory services, contracts with federal and nonfederal entities, personnel compensation and benefits, travel, and other program adjustments (\$303.6 million) (**Table 1**). Similar changes were proposed in NOAA’s FY2018 and FY2019 budget requests. Congress, as it has in past years, “retains many of these grant programs which allow States and communities to steer financial priorities through a bottom-up approach instead of Federal agencies driving local decisions from afar” according to S.Rept. 116-127.

**Table I. NOAA ORF and PAC FY2019-Enacted, FY2020-Requested, and FY2020-Enacted Direct Obligations and Appropriations**  
(nominal \$ in millions)

Line Offices	FY2019 Enacted <sup>a</sup>	FY2020 Base <sup>b</sup>	Requested Increases	Requested Reductions or Terminations <sup>c</sup>	FY2020 Budget Request	FY2020 Enacted
NESDIS	\$1,698.5	\$1,691.6	\$26.6	\$245.5	\$1,472.7	\$1,514.2
NMFS	\$908.8	\$921.6	\$1.6	\$111.5	\$811.7	\$947.7
NOS	\$585.5	\$590.3	\$4.0	\$223.1	\$371.2	\$606.5
NWS	\$1,162.6	\$1,183.5	\$11.3	\$113.0	\$1,081.9	\$1,168.6
OAR	\$566.1	\$571.7	\$17.3	\$253.9	\$335.1	\$590.4
OMAO	\$325.8	\$330.0	\$4.9	\$10.8	\$323.4	\$342.4
Mission Support	\$292.2	\$303.7	\$15.1	\$52.7	\$266.2	\$330.4
<b>Total Direct Obligations<sup>d</sup></b>	<b>\$5,539.5</b>	<b>\$5,592.6</b>	<b>\$80.8</b>	<b>\$1,010.5</b>	<b>\$4,662.2</b>	<b>\$5,500.1</b>
<b>Total Appropriations<sup>e</sup></b>	<b>\$5,352.3</b>	<b>\$5,395.0</b>			<b>\$4,464.6</b>	<b>\$5,294.8</b>

**Sources:** CRS from NOAA *Budget Estimates Fiscal Year 2020*; NOAA *2020 Budget Summary*.

**Notes:** ORF = operations, research, and facilities; PAC= procurement, acquisition, and construction.

- FY2019 and FY2020-enacted amounts do not include supplemental appropriations.
- FY2020 base is equal to the FY2019-enacted amount plus expected Adjustments-To-Base, such as certain inflationary adjustments.
- Proposed elimination of the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund and Fisheries Disaster Assistance Fund are not included in the totals.
- “Total Direct Obligations,” or total program or funding level, includes direct new appropriations, transfers from other NOAA accounts, and recoveries of canceled prior-year obligations. Totals may differ due to rounding.
- “Total Appropriations” are a part of the total direct obligations. They include the enacted or requested appropriation dollars for the fiscal year and do not include recoveries of canceled prior-year obligations, transfers from other NOAA accounts, or supplemental appropriations.

### Changes to the Promote and Develop American Fishery Products & Research Pertaining to American Fisheries Fund (P&D Fund)

The P&D fund is financed through a mandatory transfer from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) of 30% of duties on imported fisheries products. In recent years, NOAA has requested to transfer all of these funds to ORF, but Congress typically has required that a portion fund the Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) grant program for fisheries research and development projects. For FY2020, the Administration requested Congress directly appropriate funding to DOC to be “available for the same purposes as previous receipt-funded activities.” According to P.L. 116-93 and S.Rept. 116-127, Congress required the transfer of funds from USDA and maintained the provision restricting the use of the P&D Fund to activities that “directly benefit U.S. fisheries and fishery communities,” including the S-K grant program.

### Future Satellite Funding

NOAA provides global weather and environmental data from satellites and other remote sensing technologies to other federal agencies, the public, and the private sector. Congress has previously raised questions about NOAA’s satellite programs, particularly Joint Polar Satellite System (JPSS), regarding data continuity, program management, and budget. For FY2020, NOAA requested to restructure the NESDIS budget and organization to “increase cost and program efficiencies.” NOAA’s proposal would have merged JPSS and Polar Follow On into a new subactivity

titled the Polar Weather Satellites (PWS). The request also would have organized several other FY2019 subactivities into new subactivities, titled Low Earth Orbit, Geostationary Earth Orbit, and Systems/Services Architecture and Engineering (SAE). For FY2020, according to the explanatory statement accompanying P.L. 116-93 and S.Rept. 116-127, Congress approved the creation of the PWS and SAE subactivities but did not adopt the other proposed NESDIS budget and staffing reorganizations.

### Space Commerce

Together with other agencies, DOC regulates and promotes the commercial space sector, including commercial remote sensing satellites. NOAA currently houses the Commercial Remote Sensing Regulatory Affairs Office (CRSRA) and Office of Space Commerce (OSC). NOAA’s FY2020 budget request would have moved CRSRA and OSC to the DOC, as part of the creation of the Bureau of Space Commerce. In the explanatory statement accompanying P.L. 116-93 and S.Rept. 116-127, Congress did not approve the proposal and directed the Secretary of Commerce to contract with the National Academy of Public Administration to conduct an independent review of the proposal.

**Eva Lipiec**, Analyst in Natural Resources Policy

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