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# National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) FY2021 Budget Request and Appropriations

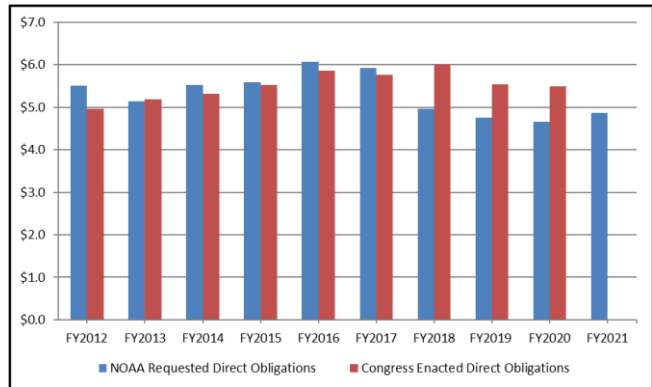
The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) mission is to understand and predict changes in weather, climate, oceans, and coasts; to share that information with others; and to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources. NOAA's work is divided among six line offices: 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 (CJS), and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. 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 discretionary funding for ORF and PAC for FY2021 and potential issues for Congress, such as NOAA's proposed changes to certain grant programs, satellite programs, and the agency's role in space commerce, and the Promote and Develop American Fishery Products & Research Pertaining to American Fisheries Fund (P&D Fund).

## Agency Funding

The Administration requested a total of \$4.86 billion in discretionary direct obligations for ORF and PAC for FY2021, including \$4.63 billion in appropriations. Direct obligations include annual appropriations, transfers, and recoveries from prior year obligations. The FY2021 direct obligations request is \$645.3 million (11.7%) below the enacted FY2020 level provided in P.L. 116-93. As passed by the House, H.R. 7617 includes Division B of the CJS and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2021. Division B would provide \$5.68 billion for ORF and PAC direct obligations, \$179.6 (3.3%) million greater than the FY2020 enacted level and \$823.6 million (17.0%) greater than the FY2021 request. Over the last 10 years, NOAA direct obligations peaked in FY2018 (**Figure 1**). Since FY2012, the amounts enacted in the PAC account have ranged from about 28% to 41% of the total direct obligations.

**Figure 1. NOAA Requested and Enacted Discretionary Direct Obligations, FY2012-FY2021**  
(\$ in billions, nominal)



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

**Notes:** Direct obligations include annual appropriations, transfers, and recoveries from prior year obligations. Amounts do not include supplemental appropriations.

## Issues for Congress

According to NOAA's FY2021 budget summary, the requested budget supports priorities to (1) reduce the impacts of extreme weather and water events, (2) expand the "American Blue Economy," and (3) advance space innovation.

## Proposed Program Funding Changes

For FY2021, NOAA proposed funding increases to 20 activities under ORF and PAC, totaling over \$159.6 million, primarily for goods and services from federal and nonfederal entities (**Table 1**). NOAA also requested a reduction or elimination of 105 activities totaling \$976.4 million. Grants, subsidies, and contributions (GSC) make up a majority (\$573.2 million, 58.7%) of the \$976.4 million. GSC includes grants awarded to nonfederal entities, such as states, universities, and corporations. GSC proposed to be eliminated represents between 0.3% (NESDIS) and 34.5% (OAR) of the line offices' FY2021 base amounts. The remaining proposed eliminations are to services from nonfederal entities, advisory services, contracts with federal entities, personnel compensation and benefits, travel, and other program adjustments. The Administration proposed similar changes in the previous three fiscal years. In H.Rept. 116-455, referenced in Section 3(b) of H.R. 7617, the House Appropriations Committee stated its support for "NOAA's ongoing collaboration with academia and the private sector through cooperative institutes and competitive research."

**Table I. NOAA FY2020-Enacted, FY2021-Requested, and FY2021 House-Passed Amounts for Discretionary ORF and PAC Accounts Direct Obligations and Appropriations**

(\$ in millions, nominal)

Line Offices	FY2020 Enacted <sup>a</sup>	FY2021 Base <sup>b</sup>	Requested Increases from Base	Requested Decreases or Terminations from Base	FY2021 Budget Request	FY2021 House-Passed <sup>c</sup>	FY2021 Enacted
NESDIS	\$1,514.2	\$1,514.0	\$98.1	\$108.0	\$1,504.0	\$1,509.7	NA
NMFS	\$947.7	\$973.3	\$0.4	\$196.8	\$841.7	\$967.6	NA
NOS	\$606.5	\$616.9	\$11.0	\$246.9	\$381.0	\$631.4	NA
NWS	\$1,168.6	\$1,195.2	\$7.0	\$81.9	\$1,120.3	\$1,204.5	NA
OAR	\$590.4	\$598.7	\$10.7	\$256.7	\$352.7	\$626.4	NA
OMAO	\$342.4	\$350.5	\$2.0	\$20.4	\$332.1	\$377.3	NA
Mission Support	\$330.4	\$358.3	\$30.3	\$65.6	\$323.0	\$361.5	NA
<b>Total Direct Obligations<sup>d</sup></b>	<b>\$5,500.1</b>	<b>\$5,607.0</b>	<b>\$159.6</b>	<b>\$976.4</b>	<b>\$4,854.8</b>	<b>\$5,679.7</b>	<b>NA</b>
<b>Total Appropriations<sup>e</sup></b>	<b>\$5,294.8</b>	<b>\$5,383.9</b>			<b>\$4,631.8</b>	<b>\$5,396.0</b>	<b>NA</b>

**Sources:** CRS, using explanatory statement accompanying P.L. 116-93; NOAA, *Budget Estimates Fiscal Year 2021*; H.Rept. 116-455; Division B of H.R. 7617, as passed by the House.

**Notes:** NA = not available; ORF = operations, research, and facilities; PAC = procurement, acquisition, and construction.

- The table shows the FY2020 NESDIS amount as noted in the explanatory statement accompanying P.L. 116-93.
- FY2021 base is equal to the FY2020-enacted amount plus expected "Adjustments-To-Base," such as certain inflationary adjustments.
- There is a discrepancy between the direct obligations totals noted in H.Rept. 116-455 (\$5,678.4 million) and as passed by the House in Division B of H.R. 7617 (\$5,679.7 million). The table shows the amounts per line office from H.Rept. 116-455 and total direct obligations and appropriations as passed in Division B of H.R. 7617.
- "Total Direct Obligations," or total program or funding level, include annual appropriations, transfers, and recoveries from 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 supplemental appropriations.

### Satellite Programs

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 may consider changes to NOAA's satellite programs, including Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites (GOES). For instance, issues with the main imaging instrument on GOES-17, which launched in 2018, prompted NOAA and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration to convene a mishap investigation board and the DOC Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to complete an investigation. NOAA plans to launch two more GOES in the next four years. In H.Rept. 116-455, the House Appropriations Committee directed DOC to maintain oversight of NOAA satellite programs and instructed NOAA to continue to provide quarterly satellite briefings to the committee.

### Space Commerce

Together with other agencies, DOC regulates and promotes the commercial space sector, including commercial remote sensing satellites. NOAA houses the Commercial Remote Sensing Regulatory Affairs Office (CRSRA) and Office of Space Commerce (OSC). NOAA's FY2021 budget request again proposed to elevate CRSRA and OSC to DOC as departmental activities. As in past years, H.Rept. 116-455 indicates that the House Appropriations Committee does not approve the transfer, and Members are to await the

results of a National Academy of Public Administration study on the topic.

### P&D Fund

The P&D Fund, an account outside of ORF and PAC, is financed through a mandatory transfer from the Department of Agriculture (USDA) to DOC of 30% of duties on imported fisheries products. In FY2021, NOAA proposed that (1) Congress directly appropriate mandatory funding to DOC rather than transfer amounts from USDA (the initial funding level would be equal to the expected transfer from USDA in FY2021, with adjustments in future years), and (2) funds would be used for ORF activities only. In previous years, Congress has kept the transfer structure in place and directed NOAA to use the P&D funds to support specific ORF activities and the congressionally authorized Saltonstall-Kennedy (S-K) grant program, which supports fisheries research and development projects. Division B of H.R. 7617, as passed by the House, retains the transfer from USDA and directs NOAA to use the funds for ORF Fishery Science and Management program activities, with no mention of S-K grant funding. For more on the P&D Fund and S-K program, see CRS Report R46335, *Saltonstall-Kennedy Act: Background and Issues*, by Harold F. Upton.

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