
What is NOAA?

"NOAA's work touches the daily lives of every person in the United States and in much of the world. From weather forecasts in the Midwest to fisheries management on the East Coast, from safe navigation to coastal services in the Gulf, from remote sensing to climate research and ocean exploration, NOAA's products and services contribute to the foundation of a healthy economy and affect approximately one-third of the nation's gross domestic product."

- Vice Admiral Conrad Lautenbacher
Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
and NOAA Administrator

NOAA's Mission and Vision

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is a science-based federal agency within the Department of Commerce with regulatory, operational, and information service responsibilities. NOAA manages a \$3.9 billion (FY 2008) budget and about 12,800 employees with a presence in every state and our territories.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment and to conserve, protect, and manage coastal, marine, and Great Lakes' resources to meet our nation's economic, social, and environmental needs. Americans rely on NOAA for an incredible variety of products: providing local weather forecasts, keeping coastal waters safe and vibrant, maintaining a sustainable supply of quality seafood, ensuring the safe transport of waterborne cargo, as well as keeping a close eye on the ever-changing affects of our sun on space weather.

NOAA's vision is an informed society that uses a comprehensive understanding of the role of the oceans, coasts, and atmosphere in the global ecosystem to make the best social and economic decisions. Success in achieving our vision depends upon how well we understand Earth's dynamic, natural systems and how well we assess the affects of human activities upon those systems. NOAA warns of dangerous weather, charts our seas, protects and guides our use of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes' resources, and conducts research to improve our understanding and stewardship of the environment, which sustains us all. To achieve its mission, and to fulfill its vision, NOAA focuses on four service goals:

1. Protect, restore, and manage the use of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes' resources through an ecosystem-based approach to management.
 2. Understand climate variability and change to enhance society's ability to plan and respond.
 3. Serve society's needs for weather and water information.
 4. Support the nation's commerce with information for safe, efficient, and environmentally sound transportation.
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NOAA Offices

The National Weather Service

The National Weather Service (NWS) provides weather, water, and climate forecasts and warnings for the United States, its territories, adjacent waters, and ocean areas. In performing this critical mission, NWS provides for the protection of life and property and the enhancement of the national economy. NWS infrastructure facilitates national and international data and products that, in turn, serve other governmental agencies, the private sector, the public, and the global community. NWS manages a budget of \$911.4 million (FY 2008) and about 5,000 employees with 122 weather forecast offices throughout the country.

The National Ocean Service

The National Ocean Service (NOS) endeavors to balance our use of coastal and ocean resources today with the need to protect, preserve, and restore these priceless realms for future generations. NOS collects, monitors, analyzes, and provides scientific understanding about coastal resource conditions, issues, and problems through buoys, tide gauges, and other observations. NOS also provides the nation with all its nautical charts and maps and manages a budget of \$524 million (FY 2008) and about 1,200 employees.

The National Marine Fisheries Service

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible for the stewardship for the world's largest exclusive economic zone. NMFS protects and preserves the nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, fisheries management, law enforcement, and habitat conservation. NMFS has both domestic and international responsibilities, and is a leading voice for the economic benefits that can be derived from sustainable use and conservation of living marine resources. NMFS manages a budget of \$801.7 million (FY 2008) and about 2,610 employees.

The National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service

The National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS) observes our Earth, the sun, our oceans, and our atmosphere every day. These observations benefit many sectors of society and are critical to the United States' contribution to a global environmental observation strategy. NESDIS develops and operates our nation's weather satellites, composed of the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellites for short-range warning and forecasting, and the Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellites for longer term forecasting. NESDIS is in the midst of acquiring its next generation geostationary satellite, GOES-R Series, and its next generation polar-orbiting satellite, the National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite Series (NPOESS). NESDIS provides data and information to a broad spectrum of users including NOAA National Weather Service forecasters who issue storm warnings, national and international researchers who study the environment, and the general public. NESDIS manages a budget of \$954.1 million (FY 2008) and about 840 employees.

The Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research

Research is at the center of all NOAA services. The Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) is NOAA's primary research and development organization, and studies the Earth system from the deep ocean to the upper atmosphere. OAR develops the products and services that help us understand and predict environmental changes, such as our changing climate on local to global scales, and at time scales from minutes to millennia. Research, conducted at in-house laboratories and by external programs, support's NOAA's mission to meet our nation's economic, social, and environmental needs. OAR's network consists of seven internal research laboratories; 33 Sea Grant university programs; six undersea research centers; research grants program through the Climate Program Office, Office of Ocean Exploration and Research, and Office of Weather and Air Quality; and 13 cooperative institutes with academia. OAR manages a budget of \$398 million (FY 2008) and about 867 employees.

The Office of Program Planning and Integration

The Office of Program Planning and Integration (PPI) is leading the implementation of NOAA's Strategic Vision. PPI provides corporate management to coordinate NOAA's many lines of service with the nation's many needs for environmental information and stewardship. It ensures that NOAA's investments and actions are guided by a strategic plan, are based on sound social and economic analysis, adhere to executive and legislative science, technology and environmental policy, and integrate the full breadth of NOAA's resources, knowledge and talent to meet its stated mission goal. PPI manages a budget of \$1.975 million (FY 2008) and about 11 employees.

The Office of Marine and Aviation Operations

The mission of the Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO) is to manage, operate, and maintain the nation's largest civil fleet of research and survey ships (20) and aircraft (13), which collect data for NOAA's environmental stewardship assessment and prediction programs. OMAO also manages NOAA's Dive Program and the NOAA Commissioned Corps, the nation's seventh uniformed service. The NOAA fleet supports a wide range of marine activities, including fisheries and coastal research, nautical charting, and long-range ocean and climate studies. NOAA's ships are specially equipped and designed to support the agency's programs, and have capabilities not found in the commercial fleet. Like the ships, NOAA aircraft are specially modified to carry instrument packages appropriate for NOAA's missions and are unique in their ability to support the agency's atmospheric research and a wide range of other research programs. NOAA aircraft operate throughout the world, providing a wide range of research and survey capabilities, from weather research, hurricane surveillance, to snow pack surveys for flood prediction and water resource management, to coastline mapping for erosion studies, to marine mammal surveys. OMAO manages a budget of \$181.7 million (FY 2008) and about 746 employees.