

Today's hearing will focus on the budget requests for two agencies within the Subcommittee's jurisdiction: the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

This afternoon we will address the many challenges facing both agencies given their respective budget realities.

While the Administration's total request for NOAA in Fiscal Year 2009 is \$202.6 million more than was enacted in 2008, the oceans and water-related line offices have proposed cuts totaling \$48.9 million. This cut undermines the Administration's commitment to its own Ocean Action Plan and runs counter to the responsible increases advocated by the Joint Ocean Commission Initiative.

Responsible use and stewardship of ocean and coastal resources cannot be advanced when, for example, the Coral Reef

Program is cut by \$3.4 million, the Fisheries Habitat Restoration Program is reduced by \$2.9 million, and the National Marine Sanctuary System is level-funded despite glaring needs for additional support.

Similarly, the budget request for program activities of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is cut \$64.6 million from the enacted funding level for Fiscal Year 2008. The Endangered Species Account was cut by \$3.7 million, even though over 200 recovery plans for endangered and threatened species are still needed. Also important, law enforcement funding was cut by \$2.3 million, a reduction that will further over-stretch enforcement agents.

At a time when we should be investing more in conservation programs to plan for and address future uncertainties raised by a changing global climate, key programs that conserve, protect and

enhance fish, wildlife and plants for the benefit of the American people have instead lost funding.