



May 26, 1999

**The Honorable Don Young  
Chairman, Committee on Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515-6201**

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to offer the views of the Department of Commerce on H.R. 1552, the "Partial NOAA Programs Authorization Act of 1999" as ordered reported on May 6, 1999, by the Subcommittee on Fisheries Conservation, Wildlife and Oceans of the Committee on Resources.

The Department strongly opposes subsection 4(f) of H.R. 1552. Subsection 4(f) incorrectly authorizes the Coastal Ocean Program (COP) from amounts authorized under subsection 4(a) to carry out the activities of the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) for FYs 2000 and 2001. The Department would support enactment of the bill, however, if the bill is amended to authorize the COP from amounts authorized under subsection 3(a) to carry out the activities of the National Ocean Service (NOS). This could be accomplished by moving subsection 4(f) to section 3, re-designating subsection 4(f) as subsection 3(d), and increasing the authorization levels in subsection 3(a) for the activities of the NOS to \$38,806,000 in each of FYs 2000 and 2001. In addition, the authorization levels in section 4 should be amended to conform to the President's FY 2000 Budget Request.

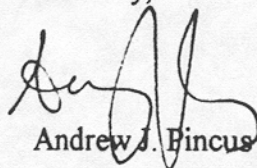
In early 1999, NOAA concluded a reorganization that was designed to provide a stronger agency focus on coastal and ocean science, and to better link its coastal and ocean science programs to its management and stewardship missions. A key component of the reorganization was to move the COP, which previously was an independent office reporting to NOAA's top management, into NOS where it would blend and leverage its efforts with other science programs and research lab activities to provide better scientific support to coastal resource decisionmakers.

The NOS reorganization was widely discussed with constituents and stakeholders over a period of more than two years before it was implemented. Members and staff of Congress were provided extensive opportunities to comment on all aspects of the proposed reorganization. The Senate approved the reprogramming request for the reorganization and the House did not object, with the exception of the proposed transfer of the Great Lakes Environmental Research Laboratory to NOS from OAR. This reorganization was finalized by both the Senate and the House in the FY1999 appropriations process.

It is the Department's view that the new NOS structure is working well, and that it would be inappropriate to disrupt that structure. Further, the former COP has now been so fully blended with other programs and functions that it no longer exists in the same form as it did prior to the reorganization.

The Office of Management and Budget advises that there is no objection to the submission of these views for the consideration of the Committee from the standpoint of the Administration's program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew J. Fincus". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "A" and "F".

Andrew J. Fincus

Identical letter sent to:

The Honorable George Miller  
House Resources Committee