

NEWS

Proposed NOAA Budget Includes Hefty Increase for Satellites

PAGE 102

The Obama administration's proposed fiscal year (FY) 2011 budget for the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) would provide the agency with \$5.55 billion, which represents a total increase of \$806.1 million, or 17% above the FY 2010 budget enacted by Congress. At a February briefing about the budget, NOAA administrator Jane Lubchenco said the budget is a very good package for the agency and that it reflects the administration's commitment to the environment, science, public safety, and job creation.

Noting that the agency's budget remained essentially flat between FY 2005 and FY 2008 during the George W. Bush administration, Lubchenco said, "the increasing demand for NOAA's services, coupled with a static budget, created a major challenge for NOAA in delivering on expectations." She said the funding picture for the agency improved with the FY 2009 and FY 2010 enacted budgets. Lubchenco noted that the proposed budget would include \$949 million for research and development, an \$82 million increase, adding, "Our 2011 request for each line office [within NOAA] is higher than it was in 2010, and we are better aligned with congressional funding levels than in previous budgets."

"When you are going up a net of 17%, I don't think there are many federal agencies that are at that level," commented NOAA budget director Steve Gallagher. Though, he also noted that funding for some programs would decline. "Overall, this is a very good budget for NOAA, and the targeted investments are in the right areas: fisheries, oceans, and climate. And those are our big priorities."

An analysis of NOAA's funding request by agency line office or division indicates that most of the increase proposed for the agency would be slated for NOAA's National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS), which operates satellites. Funding for other line offices would be fairly close to the FY 2010 enacted budget, either slightly more or less.

Funding for Satellites

The proposed NESDIS budget would jump to \$2.2 billion from \$1.4 billion, with funding for the Joint Polar Satellite System (JPSS), formerly known as the National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS), going to

\$1.1 billion from \$678 million. On 1 February, the administration announced its plan for a management restructuring of the program. Noting that NPOESS has had some significant challenges—including cost overruns, scheduling delays, and technical difficulties—Lubchenco said, "This plan, with the support of Congress, will get the program back on track." She said the restructuring would continue the development of critical Earth-observing systems required for improving weather forecasts, climate monitoring, and warning lead times of severe storms.

Also within the NESDIS budget, the Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite-R (GOES-R) systems would receive \$730 million, up from \$667.5 million; \$49.4 million would go toward the restoration of critical climate sensors on satellites; the Jason 3 Altimetry Mission would receive \$50 million, up from \$20 million; the Deep Space Climate Observatory mission would receive \$9.5 million in new funding; and the Constellation Observing System for Meteorology, Ionosphere, and Climate (COSMIC II) GPS Radio Occultation mission would get \$37 million in new funding.

Budget Specifics

The proposed budget for NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS) calls for a dip to \$550.6 million, down \$28.1 million from the FY 2010 enacted level. Ocean Resources Conservation and Assessment would receive \$178.7 million, down from \$195.9 million. Taking the biggest percentage hit would be the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), which would drop to \$22.2 million from \$33.5 million. Also taking a substantial percentage hit would be the Geodesy budget, which in previous years has included a number of earmarks; the budget would drop to \$29.4 million from \$37.3 million. Ocean and Coastal Management would increase to \$165.8 million, up from \$158.1 million; Navigation Services would receive \$156.2 million, down from \$168.2 million; and Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning would receive \$6.8 million in new funding.

In the proposed budget, the Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research (OAR) would receive a slight increase to \$464.9 million, up from \$449.1 million. Climate Research would bump to \$241.5 million from \$225.1 million; Ocean, Coastal, and Great Lakes Research would dip to

\$124.3 million from \$130.6 million. Tornado Severe Storm Research would jump to \$10 million from \$4 million; and an Integrated Ocean Acidification program would receive \$11.6 million, an increase of \$6.1 million. The budget would include \$10 million for regional and national climate assessments and \$20.9 million for the Carbon Tracker Observing and Analysis System. On 8 February, U.S. commerce secretary Gary Locke announced the intent to create a NOAA Climate Service line office that would bring together the agency's climate science and service delivery capabilities. Lubchenco said the new office would provide "one-stop shopping" for the agency's science and service related to climate changes.

The National Weather Service (NWS) would receive \$1.003 billion, remaining fairly flat from the FY 2010 level of \$999.8 million. Operations and Research would rise to \$799.9 million from \$790.1 million; and Systems Operation and Maintenance would go to \$102.6 million from \$102 million. Aviation Weather would get \$26.7 million, up from \$15.1 million.

Proposed for the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is a budget of \$992.4 million, down from \$1 billion in FY 2010. Fisheries Research and Management is slated to receive \$463.6 million, up from \$432.9 million; and Protected Species Research and Management would increase to \$210.3 million from \$204 million.

Education Funding

Within NOAA's Program Support line item, the agency's Education program appears slated for a steep drop to \$20.76 million from \$53.8 million. This does not include other educational programs that are scattered throughout NOAA. Gallagher said, "If you follow the enacted budget, the trend has been nothing but upward" for education. In FY 2009, the most recent numbers available, NOAA's total education budget was \$68.8 million. Gallagher added that the agency expects that congressional advocates might push for an increase in funding for FY 2011 and that a comprehensive assessment of NOAA's education programs could be used as "a catalyst for federal budget requests." A U.S. National Research Council report, "NOAA's education program: Review and critique," released on 3 March, is generally supportive of NOAA's educational efforts, while making suggestions for midcourse corrections.

For more information about the proposed FY 2011 budget, visit <http://www.noaa.gov/budget/>, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/budget/>, and previous articles that have appeared in *Eos* (<http://www.agu.org/pubs/eos/recent.shtml>).

—RANDY SHOWSTACK, Staff Writer