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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): FY2020 Budget Request and Appropriations

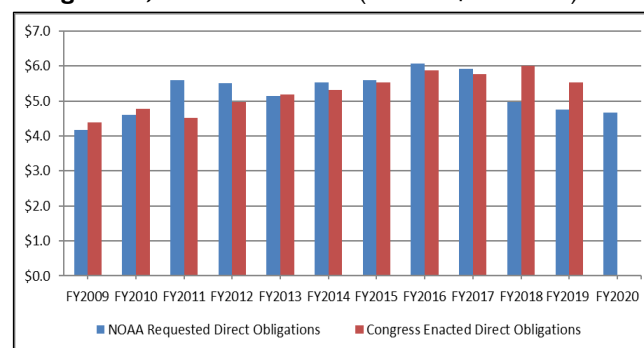
The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) mission is to understand and predict changes in weather, climate, oceans, and coasts; to share that information with others; and to conserve and manage coastal and marine ecosystems and resources. NOAA's work is divided among six line offices: 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 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, and Related Agencies appropriations law. 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 ORF and PAC funding for FY2020 and potential issues for Congress, such as NOAA's proposed program changes, the agency's requested changes to the Promote and Develop American Fishery Products & Research Pertaining to American Fisheries Fund, future satellite funding, and the agency's role in space commerce.

History of Funding

The Administration requested a total of \$4.66 billion in discretionary direct obligations for ORF and PAC for FY2020, including \$4.46 billion in appropriations. Direct obligations include appropriations, transfers from NOAA funds, and recoveries of canceled prior-year obligations. In the FY2019 omnibus (P.L. 116-6), Congress provided \$5.54 billion in direct obligations for ORF and PAC, of which \$5.35 billion was in new appropriations. The FY2020-requested amount of direct obligations is nearly 13% below the enacted FY2019 direct obligations levels. Enacted direct obligations and appropriations for NOAA ORF and PAC have generally increased from FY2009, and peaked in FY2018 (P.L. 116-6). Since FY2009, the PAC account has ranged from about 25% to 41% of the total direct obligations.

Figure 1. NOAA Requested and Enacted Direct Obligations, FY2009–FY2020 (nominal \$ in billions)



Source: Congressional Research Service, from NOAA budget justifications and congressional explanatory statements.

Note: Amounts do not include supplemental appropriations, rescissions, or sequestration.

Issues for Congress

According to NOAA's FY2020 Bluebook, the FY2020 budget supports NOAA's priorities: (1) reduce the impacts of extreme weather and water events, (2) maximize the economic contributions of ocean and coastal resources, and (3) space innovation.

Proposed Program Changes

For FY2020, the Administration proposed increases to 22 subactivities totaling over \$80 million, including a requested increase of \$18.5 million in subactivity grants, subsidies, and contributions (GSC) between the FY2020 base level and the FY2020 budget request (**Table 1**). GSC, according to NOAA, includes grants awarded to nonfederal entities, such as states, universities, and the private sector under GSC. The FY2020 budget request also proposed the reduction or elimination of 96 subactivities and additional undescribed decreases totaling over \$1 billion (**Table 1**). Of the total, more than \$490.4 million in GSC is proposed to be reduced or eliminated compared to the FY2020 base level. Activities proposed for termination include NMFS Interjurisdictional Fisheries grants, NOS Coastal Zone Management grants, OAR's National Sea Grant College Program, and the Educational Partnership Program for Minority Serving Institutions program under Mission Support. The remaining amount is composed of planned decreases to three satellite programs (\$216.6 million) and proposed reductions and eliminations to advisory services, contracts with federal and nonfederal entities, personnel compensation and benefits, travel, and other program adjustments (\$303.6 million) (**Table 1**). Similar changes were proposed in NOAA's FY2018 and FY2019 budget requests.

Table 1. NOAA ORF and PAC FY2019-Enacted and FY2020-Requested Direct Obligations and Appropriations
(nominal \$ in millions)

Line Offices	FY2019 Enacted ^a	FY2020 Base ^b	Requested Increases	Requested Reductions or Terminations ^c	FY2020 Budget Request
NESDIS	\$1,698.5	\$1,691.6	\$26.6	\$245.5	\$1,472.7
NMFS	\$908.8	\$921.6	\$1.6	\$111.5	\$811.7
NOS	\$585.5	\$590.3	\$4.0	\$223.1	\$371.2
NWS	\$1,162.6	\$1,183.5	\$11.3	\$113.0	\$1,081.9
OAR	\$566.1	\$571.7	\$17.3	\$253.9	\$335.1
OMAO	\$325.8	\$330.0	\$4.9	\$10.8	\$323.4
Mission Support	\$292.2	\$303.7	\$15.1	\$52.7	\$266.2
Total Direct Obligations^d	\$5,539.5	\$5,592.6	\$80.8	\$1,010.5	\$4,662.2
Total Appropriations^e	\$5,352.3	\$5,395.0			\$4,464.6

Sources: CRS from NOAA *Budget Estimates Fiscal Year 2020*; NOAA *2020 Budget Summary*.

Notes: ORF = operations, research, and facilities; PAC= procurement, acquisition, and construction.

- FY2019-enacted amounts do not include supplemental appropriations.
- FY2020 base is equal to the FY2019-enacted amount plus expected Adjustments-To-Base, such as certain inflationary adjustments.
- Proposed elimination of the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund and Fisheries Disaster Assistance Fund are not included in the FY2019 or FY2020 totals.
- “Total Direct Obligations,” or total program or funding level, includes direct new appropriations, transfers from other NOAA accounts, and recoveries of canceled prior-year obligations.
- “Total Appropriations” includes the enacted or requested appropriation dollars for the fiscal year and does not include recoveries of canceled prior-year obligations, transfers from other NOAA accounts, or supplemental appropriations.

Changes to the Promote and Develop American Fishery Products & Research Pertaining to American Fisheries Fund (P&D Fund)

The P&D fund is financed through a mandatory transfer from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) of 30% of duties on imported fisheries products. In recent years, NOAA has requested to transfer all of these funds to ORF, but Congress has typically required that a small portion fund the Saltonstall-Kennedy grants program for fisheries research and development projects. In FY2020, the Administration requests to directly appropriate funding to DOC to be “available for the same purposes as previous receipt-funded activities.”

Future Satellite Funding

NOAA provides global weather and environmental data from satellites—such as the Joint Polar Satellite System (JPSS), Polar Follow-On (PFO), Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite (GOES)—and other remote sensing technologies, to other federal agencies, the public, and the private sector. Congress has previously raised questions about NOAA’s satellite programs, particularly JPSS, regarding data continuity, program management, and budget. In FY2020, NOAA requested would restructure the NESDIS budget and organization to “increase cost and program efficiencies” through a combination of NOAA-owned and managed assets, partner assets, commercial

partnerships, and data purchases. NOAA’s proposal would merge JPSS and PFO into a new subactivity called the Polar Weather Satellites (PWS). The request would also organize several other FY2019 subactivities into new subactivities, titled Low Earth Orbit, Geostationary Earth Orbit, and Systems/Services Architecture and Engineering. The Administration also proposed the creation of the PWS subactivity in FY2019, but Congress directed NOAA to retain its current satellite program structure in the FY2019 conference report (H.Rept. 116-9) accompanying P.L. 116-6.

Space Commerce

Together with other agencies, DOC regulates and promotes the commercial space sector, including commercial remote sensing satellites. The 115th Congress held hearings on NOAA’s involvement in space commerce. NOAA currently houses the Commercial Remote Sensing Regulatory Affairs Office (CRSRA) and Office of Space Commerce (OSC). In FY2019, Congress met the Administration’s budget request for CRSRA and OSC. NOAA’s FY2020 budget request would move CRSRA and OSC to the DOC, as part of the creation of the Bureau of Space Commerce.

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