

## 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."*

- **Dr. Jane Lubchenco**  
**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 \$4.748 billion (FY 2010) budget and has 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. NOAA's comprehensive system for acquiring observations – from satellites to ships to radars – provides the quality data and information critical for the safe conduct of daily life and the basic functioning of a modern economy. 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 five service goals:

1. **Ecosystems:** Protect, restore, and manage the use of ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes' resources through an ecosystem-based approach to management.
2. **Climate:** Understand climate variability and change to enhance society's ability to plan and respond.
3. **Weather and Water:** Serve society's needs for weather and water information.
4. **Commerce and Transportation:** Support the nation's commerce with information for safe, efficient, and environmentally sound transportation.
5. **Mission Support:** Provide critical support for NOAA's Mission.

### NOAA Offices

#### The National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service

NOAA's National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service (NESDIS) observes our Earth, the sun, our oceans, and our atmosphere. 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 environmental 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. Additionally, NESDIS operates National Data Centers that house the world's largest archive of climatic, oceanographic, and geophysical data. NESDIS provides data and information to a broad spectrum of users including weather forecasters who issue storm warnings, national and international researchers who study the environment, and the public. NESDIS manages a budget of \$1.398 billion (FY 2010) and about 844 employees. For more information, please visit <http://www.nesdis.noaa.gov/>.

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### **The National Marine Fisheries Service**

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is responsible for the stewardship of 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 \$1.008 billion (FY 2010) and about 3,000 employees. For more information, please visit <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/>.

### **The National Ocean Service**

NOAA's National Ocean Service (NOS) delivers the tools and services needed to understand, predict, and protect America's coasts, Great Lakes, and ocean waters. This vast area, which provides places to live, food, jobs, commerce, recreation, and energy, is facing unprecedented pressure from threats such as climate change, marine debris, and port congestion. In response, NOS is undertaking a range of activities, from producing nautical charts and monitoring sea-level trends to managing national marine sanctuaries, providing funding to states to manage and protect coastal areas, participating in immediate response to hazardous spills, and supporting damage assessment and restoration activities. NOS manages a budget of \$578.7 million (FY 2010) and about 1,240 employees. For more information, please visit <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/>.

### **The National Weather Service**

NOAA's 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 collects environmental information and provides services for other governmental agencies, the private sector, the public, and the global community. NWS manages a budget of \$999.8 million (FY 2010) and about 5,000 employees with 122 weather forecast offices, 13 river forecast centers and dozens of other specialty prediction centers throughout the country. For more information, please visit <http://www.nws.noaa.gov/>.

### **The Office of Marine and Aviation Operations**

NOAA's Office of Marine and Aviation Operations (OMAO) manages, operates, and maintains the nation's largest civil fleet of research and survey ships (20) and aircraft (13), as well as NOAA's Dive Program and the NOAA Commissioned Corps, the nation's seventh uniformed service. NOAA's ships are specially equipped and designed to support the agency's programs, and have capabilities not found in the commercial fleet. NOAA aircraft are specially modified to carry instrument packages appropriate for NOAA's missions 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 \$196.6 million (FY 2010) and about 914 employees. For more information, please visit <http://www.oma.noaa.gov/>.

### **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. OAR research supports NOAA's mission to meet our nation's economic, social, and environmental needs and has a network that consists of research laboratories grant programs, and cooperative institutes with academia. OAR manages a budget of \$449.1 million (FY 2010) with about 800 federal employees and contributes to NOAA funding that supports about 900 cooperative institute employees. For more information, please visit <http://www.research.noaa.gov/>.

### **The Office of Program Planning and Integration**

NOAA's Office of Program Planning and Integration (PPI) ensures Agency investments and actions are guided by a Strategic Plan and sound social and economic analysis, articulates strategic and annual investment priorities, improves alignment of programs to planning, and advances stakeholder involvement. PPI manages a budget of \$2.170 million (FY 2010) and about 10 employees. For more information, please visit <http://www.ppi.noaa.gov/>.