



Updated January 10, 2019

# National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA): FY2019 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 function.

Congress generally funds NOAA, within 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 categories of spending—operations, research, and facilities (ORF) and procurement, acquisition, and construction (PAC)—as well as a variety of fisheries funds. Mandatory appropriations are generally a small percentage of total NOAA appropriations and are disbursed to a variety of funds, such as fisheries programs and NOAA Corps Commissioned Officers benefits. This CRS product examines ORF and PAC funding for FY2019 and potential issues for Congress, such as NOAA’s proposed elimination of grant programs, the agency’s plans for future weather and environmental satellites, and its policies regarding space commerce.

## History of Funding

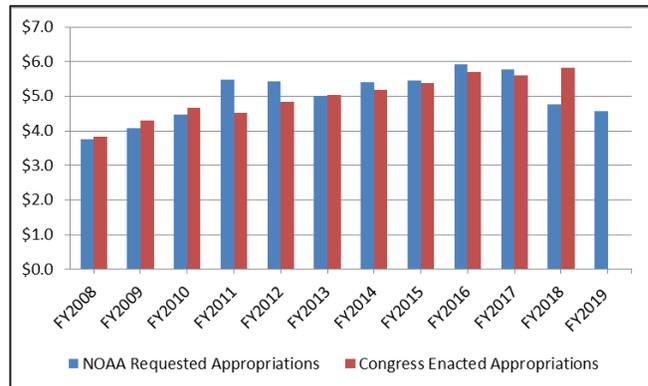
The Administration requested a total of \$4.75 billion in discretionary direct obligations for ORF and PAC for FY2019, including \$4.56 billion in new appropriations. In the FY2018 omnibus (P.L. 115-141), Congress provided \$6.00 billion in direct obligations for ORF and PAC, of which \$5.83 billion was in new appropriations. (See the notes to **Table 1** for a description of direct obligations and appropriations.) Enacted appropriations for NOAA ORF and PAC have increased from \$3.84 billion in FY2008 to \$5.83 billion in FY2018 (**Figure 1**). Since FY2008, the PAC subaccount has grown from about 25% of the total enacted budget to nearly 40%. Increased funding for satellite systems acquisition constitutes most of the increase in that time period.

## Issues for Congress

According to NOAA’s budget justification, the FY2019 budget prioritizes core government functions and supports the administration’s priorities to “reduce the impacts of

severe weather and water events and increase the sustainable contributions of [U.S.] fishery and ocean resources.”

**Figure 1. NOAA ORF and PAC Requested and Enacted Appropriations, FY2008-FY2019**  
(nominal \$ in billions)



**Source:** Congressional Research Service, from NOAA budget justifications and House Committee on Appropriations explanatory statements.

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

## Proposed Program Reductions or Eliminations

For FY2019, the Administration proposed increases to 21 subactivities totaling over \$55 million. It also proposed the reduction or elimination of 65 subactivities totaling over \$1 billion. Proposed reductions or eliminations to subactivity grants, subsidies, and contributions (GSC) budget line items total more than \$340 million between the FY2019 base level and the FY2019 budget request (**Table 1**). The GSC budget line provides funding to nonfederal entities, such as states, universities, and the private sector, through grants and competitive research opportunities. Activities proposed for termination include NMFS Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Assistance grants, NOS Coastal Zone Management grants, NWS National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program grants, OAR’s National Sea Grant College Program, and the Educational Partnership Program for Minority Serving Institutions program under Mission Support. Planned decreases to the two satellite programs account for more than \$550 million of the remaining \$697 million in proposed reductions, discussed below. The remaining proposed reductions and eliminations are related to stand-alone or GSC-associated budget line items such as purchases, full-time employees, travel, and other program adjustments (**Table 1**). Similar changes were proposed in NOAA’s FY2018 budget request.

**Table I. NOAA FY2018 Enacted Appropriations, FY2019 Requested ORF and PAC Obligations, and Proposed FY2019 Legislation** (\$ in thousands)

Line Offices	FY2018 Enacted <sup>a</sup>	FY2019 Base <sup>b</sup>	Requested GSC to be Eliminated <sup>c</sup>	Other Requested Eliminations or Reductions	FY2019 Budget Request	H.R. 5952 (House-reported)	S. 3072 (Senate-reported)
NESDIS	\$2,100,571	\$2,190,980	\$0	\$550,959	\$1,640,021	\$1,661,713	\$1,743,208
NMFS	\$882,957	\$856,351	\$19,407	\$26,460	\$810,484	\$875,260	\$924,889
NOS	\$565,087	\$522,640	\$139,103	\$1,943	\$381,594	\$557,579	\$587,800
NWS	\$1,157,102	\$1,128,162	\$13,719	\$61,671	\$1,052,772	\$1,143,000	\$1,161,378
OAR	\$548,519	\$514,051	\$150,265	\$42,135	\$321,651	\$503,339	\$549,256
OMAO	\$457,739	\$298,835	\$0	\$0 <sup>d</sup>	\$303,731	\$249,250	\$327,298
Mission Support	\$289,540	\$276,129	\$17,934	\$13,623	\$244,572	\$275,626	\$300,256
<b>Total Direct Obligations<sup>e</sup></b>	<b>\$6,001,515</b>	<b>\$5,787,148</b>	<b>\$340,428</b>	<b>\$696,791</b>	<b>\$4,754,825</b>	<b>\$5,265,767</b>	<b>\$5,594,085</b>
<b>Total Appropriations<sup>f</sup></b>	<b>\$5,827,015</b>	<b>\$5,593,082</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>	<b>\$4,560,759</b>	<b>\$5,075,267</b>	<b>\$5,405,605</b>

**Sources:** CRS from NOAA *Budget Estimates Fiscal Year 2019*; explanatory statement for P.L. 115-141; H.Rept. 115-704.

**Notes:** ORF: operations, research, and facilities; PAC: procurement, acquisition, and construction; GSC: grants, subsidies, and contributions.

- FY2018 enacted amounts do not include supplemental appropriations.
- FY2019 budget request provides an estimate of FY2019 expenses based on the FY2018 Annualized Continuing Resolution and expected adjustments.
- The amounts reflect requested changes greater than 5% of a Program, Project, and Activity (PPA), new starts, or terminations. Requested changes less than 5% of the PPA are not included in the amounts above.
- The Administration proposed a \$4.90 million increase from the FY2019 base to the OMAO line office.
- “Total Direct Obligations,” or total program or funding level, includes direct new appropriations, transfers from NOAA funds, 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.

House and Senate committees each reported an FY2019 Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies appropriations bill (H.R. 5952 and S. 3072), but neither received floor consideration prior to the end of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress. Both bills would have provided more funding (\$5.08 billion and \$5.41 billion, respectively) to NOAA than it requested for FY2019 but less than the FY2018 enacted amount. Neither bill would have adopted the Administration’s requested reductions or eliminations of GSC. Congress enacted two continuing resolutions (P.L. 115-245 and P.L. 115-298) to provide funding at FY2018 levels through December 7, 2018, and December 21, 2018, respectively. NOAA’s FY2019 funding lapsed on December 22, 2018, after the expiration of P.L. 115-298.

### 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. The FY2019 request would merge JPSS and PFO into a new program, Polar Weather Satellites (PWS), and fund continued development and work on JPSS, and the

next generation of GOES satellites. H.R. 5952 would have met and S. 3072 would have exceeded the requested funding amount for PWS and GOES. Both bills also would have required the Office of Inspector General to investigate and audit activities related to satellite PAC.

### Space Commerce

Together with other agencies, DOC regulates and promotes the commercial space sector, including commercial remote sensing satellites. The 115<sup>th</sup> 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). NOAA’s FY2019 budget request proposes level or increased funding to enact National Space Council recommendations and space commerce-related Administration directives. The FY2019 House and Senate reports specified funding levels for OSC and for NESDIS, which includes CRSRA, but not for CRSRA itself. Proposals to reorganize DOC’s role in space commerce, including the department’s new designation as the lead civil agency for space traffic management and space situational awareness, remain unresolved.

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