



April 10, 2025

The Honorable Susan Collins
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol, Room S-146A
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Capitol, Room S-128
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Collins and Ranking Member Murray,

The Appropriations Committee has the opportunity to further America's progress in fisheries management and continue to rebuild our fishery resources for economic prosperity, seafood security, recreational enjoyment, and increased ocean health by providing full funding to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), especially the **Operations, Research and Facilities Account (ORF)**, which includes the National Marine Fisheries Service.

The importance of NOAA's role in the safety and success of the fishing and seafood industries is indisputable. From recreational and small-boat commercial fishermen to seafood purveyors and chefs, people depend on science-based management of our fisheries and oceans to ensure they can keep their businesses and local economies going and deliver healthy, domestic seafood to the tables of millions of Americans. U.S. fisheries generate approximately 2.3 million jobs and more than \$470 billion to our economy. We need the fisheries experts and resources at NOAA to do the hard work of keeping our oceans healthy and our fisheries productive so coastal communities and working waterfronts continue to thrive and seafood lovers across the nation can enjoy the ocean's bounty.

Small businesses, commercial fishermen and recreational anglers depend on the National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) to protect fish populations, manage federal fisheries, and safeguard ecologically important habitat. Without these essential functions, marine ecosystems and the livelihoods that they support are at risk.

We believe NOAA's ORF account requires consistent and dedicated funding at mission-achievable levels of no less than FY24 amounts. Anything less would endanger the intergenerational fishing culture that forms the economic and social fabric of the coastal United States. We request that the Senate Appropriations Committee designate FY26 funds for ORF at FY24 levels or above so that our fisheries can continue to support American jobs and businesses.

The Marine Fish Conservation Network (Network) is a coalition of commercial and recreational fishing associations, regional and national conservation groups, aquaria, sustainable seafood suppliers, and marine science organizations dedicated to sustaining abundant fish populations, healthy marine ecosystems, and thriving working waterfront communities through defending and strengthening U.S. ocean conservation policy and science-based fisheries management.

Our mission is to conserve and revitalize wild ocean fisheries for the economic betterment, cultural enrichment, and health benefit of people and communities nationwide. We are dedicated to ensuring that abundant, productive, and resilient U.S. ocean fisheries will provide jobs, economic security, and sustainable domestic seafood now and for future generations.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of assistance or provide additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robert C. Vandermark". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping "V" and a long, horizontal stroke at the end.

Robert C. Vandermark