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National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) FY2022 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 (MS) office, which provides planning, administrative, financial, information technology, and other services to the line offices.

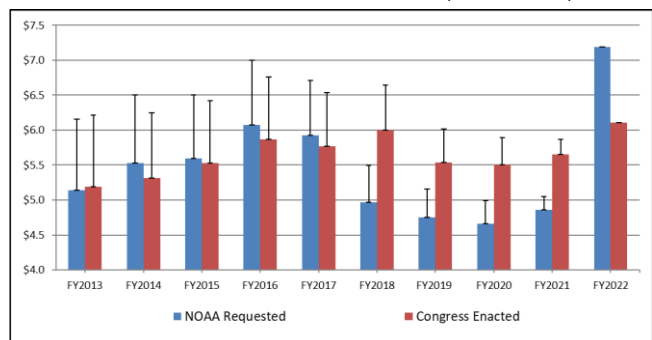
Congress provides NOAA, an agency of the Department of Commerce (DOC), with annual mandatory and discretionary appropriations. Mandatory appropriations generally form a small percentage of total NOAA funding and are disbursed to a variety of funds that support programs in NOS, NMFS, and OMAO. Discretionary appropriations typically are included in the annual Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS), and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. Discretionary appropriations support two broad accounts—operations, research, and facilities (ORF) and procurement, acquisition, and construction (PAC)—and a few smaller accounts. This CRS product focuses on NOAA’s FY2022 discretionary funding for ORF and PAC, and briefly describes supplemental appropriations. The product also notes potential issues for Congress, including NOAA’s climate-related activities, marine and aviation fleet support, and satellite operations.

Agency Funding

NOAA requested a total of \$7.19 billion in discretionary *direct obligations* for ORF and PAC for FY2022, including \$6.92 billion in appropriations (**Table 1**). Direct obligations include annual appropriations, transfers, and recoveries from prior year obligations. In Division B of P.L. 117-103, Congress provided \$6.11 billion for ORF and PAC in FY2022, including \$5.83 billion in appropriations. The enacted amounts include \$84.35 million for community project funding/congressionally directed spending (the first time Congress has included such Member requested funding since FY2012). The NOAA FY2022 enacted amount is \$460 million above the FY2021 enacted level, \$333 million over the FY2022 base level (the FY2021 enacted amount plus certain adjustments, such as inflation), and \$1.08 billion below the FY2022 request. Over the past 10 years, enacted annual NOAA ORF and PAC direct obligation amounts peaked in FY2016 in adjusted dollars and in FY2022 in nominal dollars (**Figure 1**).

Congress also provided NOAA supplementary appropriations for ORF and PAC for use in FY2022 and beyond for expenses related to hurricanes and wildfires in 2020 and 2021 (P.L. 117-43) and restoration, observation, modeling, and forecasting activities, among others (under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act; P.L. 117-58).

Figure 1. Annual NOAA Direct Obligations for ORF and PAC Accounts, FY2013-FY2022 (\$ in billions)



Sources: CRS, from NOAA budget justifications, congressional explanatory statements, and OMB, *Historical Tables, Table 10.1*

Notes: ORF = operations, research, and facilities; PAC = procurement, acquisition, and construction. Graph whiskers denote amounts adjusted for inflation. Direct obligations include annual appropriations, transfers, and recoveries from prior year obligations.

Issues for Congress

According to NOAA’s FY2022 budget summary, the requested budget would have expanded investments in climate-related activities (research, observations, and forecasting; restoration and resilience; offshore wind; and equity), marine and aviation fleet support, and satellite operations (including observational satellites and space weather activities).

Climate-Related Activities

NOAA requested increases in FY2022 to existing activities and proposed new activities to implement Executive Order 14008, “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad.” According to the agency, the requested climate-related increases and new expenditures totaled \$855.1 million over the FY2022 base level. For example, two of NOAA’s largest funding increase requests included \$40 million to develop a competitive process in NMFS to support large-scale nonfederal habitat restoration projects and \$35 million to support additional coastal resilience activities in OAR. In the explanatory statement for P.L. 117-103, Congress did not provide the requested funds for the proposed NMFS and OAR activities but provided FY2021 enacted levels for certain activities and increased funding for other activities across the agency.

Table I. NOAA Direct Obligations and Appropriations for ORF and PAC Accounts
(\$ in millions, nominal)

Line Offices and CPF/CDS Funding	FY2021 Enacted	FY2022 Base Level ^a	FY2022 Budget Request	FY2022 House-Passed	FY2022 Senate-Introduced	FY2022 Enacted
NESDIS	1,518.5	1,521.6	2,029.0	1,830.2	1,708.6	1,617.1
NMFS	964.9	985.3	1,099.3	1,044.6	1,074.0	1,016.0
NOS	628.2	632.9	862.4	714.5	717.8	649.2
NWS	1,204.4	1,269.4	1,328.7	1,337.0	1,340.2	1,281.7
OAR	614.1	618.9	815.7	738.0	730.0	647.9
OMAO	373.7	393.5	605.1	589.9	469.0	436.8
Mission Support	345.8	354.5	450.7	407.3	406.2	376.5
CPF/CDS	NA	NA	NA	24.0	64.0	84.4
Total Direct Obligations^b	5,649.5	5,776.1	7,191.0	6,685.5^c	6,509.7	6,109.5
Total Appropriations^d	5,372.9	5,501.1	6,916.4	6,410.8	6,228.5	5,830.0

Sources: CRS, using the explanatory statements accompanying P.L. 116-260 and P.L. 117-103, and posted to the Senate Committee on Appropriations' website to accompany S. 3042; H.Rept. 117-97; and NOAA, *Budget Estimates Fiscal Year 2022, Congressional Submission*.

Notes: CPF/CDS = community project funding/congressionally directed spending; ORF = operations, research, and facilities; PAC = procurement, acquisition, and construction.

- NOAA calculated the FY2022 base level as equal to the FY2021-enacted amount plus expected "Adjustments-To-Base," such as certain inflationary adjustments.
- "Total Direct Obligations," or total program or funding level, include annual appropriations, transfers, and recoveries from prior year obligations but exclude any supplemental appropriations. Components may not sum to totals shown due to rounding.
- There is a discrepancy between the PAC Direct Obligations noted in the text (\$1,998 million) vs. table (\$1,996 million) of H.Rept. 117-97.
- "Total Appropriations" are a part of the total direct obligations. Total Appropriations include annual appropriations but exclude any supplemental appropriations.

Marine and Aviation Fleet Support

NOAA, through OMAO and its Commissioned Officer Corp (NOAA Corps), maintains a variety of specialized ships and aircraft that gather oceanographic, atmospheric, hydrographic, and fisheries data to support the agency's missions. For FY2022, the agency requested a total of \$305 million for the PAC account to support platform improvements/tech infusion (including mid-life repair to the NOAA Ship *Ronald H. Brown*) and aircraft and vessel recapitalization (NOAA received \$120 million in FY2021 for such activities). In the explanatory statement for P.L. 117-103, Congress provided NOAA with the funding it requested for ship repair (\$63 million) but a lower amount than requested for the other vessel and aircraft activities (an additional \$101.5 million).

OMAO also provides coordination, support, and guidance for uncrewed marine and aircraft systems (UxS) across NOAA through the Autonomous Uncrewed Technology Operations (AUTO) program. NOAA currently uses UxS for seafloor and habitat mapping, ocean exploration, marine mammal and fishery assessments, emergency response, and at-sea observations. In FY2022, the agency requested \$15.6 million for AUTO in OMAO's ORF account (it received \$13.7 million in FY2021). In the explanatory statement for P.L. 117-103, Congress provided \$14 million toward AUTO, with certain amounts to be used for external partnerships and data acquisition.

Satellite Operations

NOAA, through NESDIS, manages several portfolios of environmental satellites. NOAA requested changes in funding for some activities under these portfolios. For example, NOAA's largest proposed increase was \$455 million (for a total of \$465 million) for the Geostationary Extended Observations (GeoXO) program, which contributes data to weather forecasts and detects and monitors environmental hazards (e.g., wildfires, smoke, fog). NOAA's largest proposed decrease was \$252.8 million for planned reductions in Polar Weather Satellite (PWS) activities. Congress approved the funding level decrease for PWS (explanatory statement for P.L. 117-103) and provided \$150 million in total for GeoXO in FY2022 (communication with NOAA).

NOAA proposed and Congress approved some satellite budget structure changes in FY2020 and FY2021. For FY2022, NOAA requested to create two new subactivities (low-earth orbiting and space weather) to focus on portfolios of satellites and "maintain a flat overall budget." In the explanatory statement for P.L. 117-103, Congress largely adopted NOAA's FY2022 budget reorganization requests, with the exception of the proposed combining of funding for current programs with funding for next-generation satellite programs.

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