

The Honorable Kathryn D. Sullivan, Ph.D.
Undersecretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere
Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Ave NW, Room 5128
Washington, D.C. 20230

December 7, 2015

Dear Dr. Sullivan:

As former NOAA scientists, we write to thank you for standing up for the scientific integrity and independence in research critical to meeting some of the most pressing challenges we face as a nation. We urge you to continue to resist any unwarranted congressional investigations that would contribute to stifling the scientific process and even intimidate NOAA scientists and their collaborators. It is vital that you continue to protect NOAA scientists' ability to pursue research and publish data and results regardless of how contentious the findings may be.

We are proud of NOAA's responsibilities for measuring changes in the oceanic and atmospheric systems, the life support systems for the planet. As part of that process, it is an accepted and encouraged scientific practice to continually update and improve long-term datasets by incorporating new data as well as accounting for differences in sampling and measurement methods that improve over time. This maintenance and improvement of datasets is a critical ongoing function of government science agencies, including NOAA.

We are aware that the House Science Committee Chairman Lamar Smith issued a subpoena for the correspondence of NOAA scientists involved with a peer-reviewed paper in *Science* based on the recently updated long-term surface temperature dataset. We are also aware that before the committee issued the subpoena, NOAA scientists met several times with committee staff to provide all data and methodology related to this work and answer numerous questions about the research. In addition, this important scientific work was subjected to the well-established scientific process of challenge, review, and revision based on input from other peer scientists. Given the openness of the dataset and methodology, the internal and external peer review process in place at NOAA for publication in the scientific literature, and NOAA's strong scientific integrity policies that some of us assisted in developing, paradoxically Chairman Smith still continues to push for full access to scientists' correspondence, including emails, lab notes and any other written material dating back seven years.

We know firsthand that scientists need intellectual space to debate new ideas and give each other confidential feedback without worrying that an individual comment will be subject to public scrutiny at a later date. Turning over scientists' correspondence and other information to the committee would significantly damage NOAA's ability to conduct science by putting NOAA's scientific independence at risk, and making it more difficult for NOAA scientists to collaborate with peers in academia and the private sector.

While appropriate congressional oversight of NOAA is important, the use of committee time and authority to investigate individual research studies and related peer-to-peer communications through a Congressional subpoena and depositions only serves to intimidate and discourage scientists. That does a disservice to all scientists as well as the American public by stifling critical scientific exploration and analysis.

We are proud of our years of service at NOAA and of the way NOAA is standing up for its scientists and the valuable independent research they produce. To protect NOAA's scientific enterprise and the critical information it provides to guide policy decisions, we hope you will continue to resist this serious misuse of congressional oversight power.

Sincerely,

Susan Avery, Ph.D.
Directorate, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution
NOAA 2003
Last position: IPA for development of Climate Change Science Plan

Norman Bartoo, Ph.D.
Retired
NOAA 1977-2009
Last position: Acting Science Director, Southwest Fisheries Science Center, and Scientific Editor U.S. Fishery Bulletin

John Boreman, Ph.D.
Department of Applied Ecology, North Carolina State University
NOAA 1980-2008
Last position: Director of the Office of Science and Technology, NOAA Fisheries

James Buizer
Professor, University of Arizona
NOAA 1984-2003
Last position: Director, Climate and Society

Candyce Clark
Retired
NOAA 1985-2014
Last position: Program Manager, Ocean Observations, National Climate Program Office

Tracy K. Collier, Ph.D.
Delta Independent Science Board
NOAA 1972-2010
Last position: Division Director, Environmental Conservation Division, Northwest Fisheries Science Center, NOAA Fisheries

Robert S. Detrick, Ph.D.
President, Incorporated Research Institutions for Seismology
NOAA 2012-2014
Last position: Assistant Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research

William W Fox, Jr., Ph.D.
Vice President of Fisheries, World Wildlife Fund
NOAA 1967-69, 1972-82, 1990-2008
Last position: Chief Scientist and Director, Office of Science and Technology

J. Michael Hall, Ph.D.
Private Citizen
NOAA 1973-2004
Last position: Director of the Office of Global Programs

William T. Hogarth, Ph.D.
Director, Florida Institute of Oceanography, hosted by the University of South Florida
NOAA 1994-2010
Last position: Assistant Administrator for Fisheries at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Chet Koblinsky, Ph.D.
Private Citizen
NOAA 2003-2012
Last position: Director, NOAA Climate

Steve Murawski, Ph.D.
Professor and Downtown Progress - Peter Betzer Endowed Chair, University of South Florida
NOAA 1976-2010
Last position: Director of Scientific Programs and Chief Science Advisor, NOAA Fisheries

Jonathan T. Overpeck, Ph.D.
Co-Director, Institute of the Environment; Thomas R. Brown Distinguished Professor; Regents Professor of Geosciences and Atmospheric Sciences, University of Arizona
NOAA 1991-1999
Last position: Supervisory Physical Scientist and Head of the NOAA Paleoclimatology Program

Adam Parris
Executive Director, Science and Resilience Institute at Jamaica Bay
NOAA 2010-2015
Last position: Director, Climate Assessment and Services

C.F. Ropelewski, Ph.D.
Retired
NOAA 1971-1997
Last position: Senior Policy Analyst and Advisor, The Earth Institute, Columbia University

Andrew A. Rosenberg, Ph.D.
Director, Center for Science and Democracy
Union of Concerned Scientists
NOAA 1990-2000
Last position: Deputy Assistant Administrator for Fisheries

Brian J. Rothschild, Ph.D.
Montgomery Charter Professor Emeritus, School for Marine Science and Technology, University of
Massachusetts Dartmouth
NOAA 1974-1980 (Bureau of Commercial Fisheries 1962-1969)
Last position: Senior Policy Advisor to the Administrator

Paul Alan Sandifer, Ph.D.
Retired
NOAA 2003-2014
Last position: Chief Science Advisor for the National Ocean Service

Eileen Shea
President, ELS: Linking Science and Policy
NOAA 1979-2014
Last position: Pacific Regional Coordinator

Michael Sissenwine, Ph.D.
Visiting Scholar, Woods Hole Oceanographic institution
NOAA 1975-2005
Last position: Director of Scientific Programs and Chief Science Advisor

William A. Sprigg, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus, The University of Arizona
NOAA 1972-1992
Last position: Director, National Climate Program Office

Michael F. Tillman, Ph.D.
Research Associate, Center for Marine Biodiversity and Conservation, Scripps Institution of
Oceanography
NOAA 1972-2004
Last position: Director, Southwest Fisheries Science Center

Anne M. Waple, Ph.D.
Vice President and Innovation Officer, Second Nature
NOAA 2001-2008; 2009-2013
Last position: Climate Assessments Program Manager

CC: Chairman Lamar Smith, Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson, Secretary Penny Pritzker