



March 6, 2012

Jane Lubchenco, Ph.D., Administrator  
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration  
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW  
Room 5128  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Dr. Lubchenco:

This letter is to express my profound concern with NOAA's FY13 budget proposal for the National Weather Service. I am informed that among the proposed reductions is a \$4.6 million cut that would seriously affect the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program (NTHMP), DART warning buoys and end all federal support for local program activities under the Tsunami Warning and Education Act (TWEA). As the one-year anniversary of the devastating Japanese tsunami approaches, the state of our preparedness efforts must receive careful scrutiny. Agencies at all levels are reducing spending in these difficult times, but public safety must always be the first priority of government. I am concerned that NOAA's proposed cuts will ultimately leave our communities less prepared for an inevitable natural disaster.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Geology and Earth Resources Division has worked closely with NOAA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the US Geological Survey, state emergency management and local communities since TWEA's passage in 2006. People on Washington's coast and Puget Sound Basin are better able to anticipate and plan for tsunami impacts thanks to these efforts. The regional network and coordination among coastal states has been significantly strengthened as well.

As you know, the National Academy of Sciences tsunami warning and preparedness review in 2011 concluded that among other remaining challenges, "current capabilities are still not sufficient to meet the challenge posed by a tsunami generated close to land." I am acutely aware of this danger, because a significant earthquake in the Cascadia Subduction Zone off Washington's coast would generate a tsunami capable of reaching land within 30 minutes. Pacific coastal communities are struggling with effective strategies for this type of scenario and continued work through TWEA partnerships is essential to protect our citizens in harm's way.

Furthermore, the measures and successes to date still require a sustained commitment to preparedness at all levels of government or we risk losing the important progress that has been achieved. For example, we continue to await the completion of tsunami inundation models from the NTHMP for Puget Sound communities, which include an area with a projected at-risk population of 181,000 people. Through TWEA, we have produced maps and documentation

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based on NOAA modeling results that local communities may then use in evacuation and mitigation planning. Initial planning must, as with all emergency preparedness, be followed with essential education and preparation efforts for affected citizens. I am very much concerned that the proposed NTHMP cuts would slow, or halt entirely, this essential hazard evaluation work.

I strongly urge you to reconsider these reductions, work with Appropriations Committee members to restore program funding, and work with authorizing committee members to extend TWEA before its expiration at the end of September, 2012. I am happy to provide whatever assistance I can in building support within Washington State's congressional delegation for this important cause.

Sincerely,



Peter Goldmark  
Commissioner of Public Lands

- c The Honorable Maria Cantwell, United States Senator
- The Honorable Patty Murray, United States Senator
- The Honorable Norm Dicks, United States Congressman
- The Honorable Doc Hastings, United States Congressman
- The Honorable Jaime Herrera-Beutler, United States Congresswoman
- The Honorable Jay Inslee, United States Congressman
- The Honorable Rick Larsen, United States Congressman
- The Honorable Jim McDermott, United States Congressman
- The Honorable Dave Reichert, United States Congressman
- The Honorable Adam Smith, United States Congressman
- The Honorable Christine O. Gregoire, Washington State Governor