

CAMPAIGN FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

March 13, 2008

Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Chairman
Honorable Richard Shelby, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies

Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairwoman Mikulski and Ranking Member Shelby;

We write to respectfully request that you again restore funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Educational Initiatives which includes the Environmental Literacy Grants (ELG) program and increase it to \$12 million for FY 2009. We applaud you for seeking to expand this funding for the past three years, most recently to \$12 million, and encourage you to do so again.

We further request that the funding for BWET (Bay Watershed Education and Training) programs also be restored and expanded to \$12 million. This amount will enable NOAA to continue the expansion of BWET programs to other regions begun by Congress last year without diminishing funding for other programs.

In the prior four years, these funds have been vital to advancing ocean and atmospheric literacy in the United States, a major goal of both the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy Report, the President's U.S. Ocean Action Plan, and most importantly, the new America COMPETES Act. These two education initiatives have been well received by the ocean and atmospheric literacy community, and we commend you for your leadership in seeking to restore these funds in prior years.

NOAA is the nation's leading expert on weather, climate and ocean information. This information is more important than ever as the planet changes in ways that put us at risk. The number of heat waves has increased; the number of regions experiencing drought has increased; more precipitation is falling as rain instead of snow in northern regions and the oceans are becoming more acidic. The ELG program enables NOAA to partner with the top science centers, aquaria, and educators in the country to provide information about these vital issues. It also enables NOAA to leverage the vast array of climate science being undertaken to increase public understanding and the quality of education in critical areas.

For example, these grants will enable more than 20 million people to gain access to compelling up-to-date weather, climate and ocean information through the Science on a Sphere and Ocean Today Kiosk. AAAS climate education

standards have been updated to reflect state-of-the-art climate science. In collaboration with the National Science Teachers Association, thousands of teachers have been given access to the most accurate scientific information on climate, corals and hurricanes.

The NOAA Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) program offers competitive grants to support existing environmental education programs, fosters the growth of new programs, and encourages development of partnerships among environmental education programs within selected watershed systems. BWET awards to state and local education departments and foundations have provided environmental education opportunities to over 100,000 students and 10,000 teachers. The program currently operates in the Chesapeake Bay, California and Hawaii. With the increase in FY 2008 BWET funds from Congress, this program is expanding to the Pacific Northwest, the northern Gulf of Mexico and New England.

Yet much remains to be done. An increased funding level of \$12 million for Education Initiatives including ELG would be used to implement the education recommendations in the President's U.S. Ocean Action Plan, particularly the goal to strengthen collaboration among public/private sectors, states/regions, scientists/educators and the federal agencies. The increase would provide additional funds to:

- Further leverage the existing capabilities of formal and informal education partners through competitive grants;
- Coordinate regional education efforts, such as the education component of the Gulf of Mexico Alliance; and
- Establish a coordinated education strategy across Federal agencies.

\$12 million for the BWET programs will enable NOAA to continue the expansion of BWET programs to other regions begun by Congress last year, without diminishing funding for other programs.

In short, an expansion of both these proven, successful programs to \$12 million each will help NOAA to better meet its stewardship mandate by further improving the public's understanding of key ocean and atmospheric concepts, as well as to better fulfill its educational function as envisioned by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the America COMPETES Act.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact James Elder, Campaign for Environmental Literacy, at 978-526-7768, or elder@FundEE.org.

Sincerely,

American Forest Foundation (Kathy McGlaulin, Senior Vice President, Education)

Association of Nature Center Administrators (Jennifer Levy, Executive Director)

Association of Zoos and Aquariums (Steve Olson, Vice President of Government Affairs)

Campaign for Environmental Literacy (James Elder, Director)

Consortium for Ocean Leadership (Robert Gagosian, President)

Council on Environmental Education (Josetta Hawthorne, Executive Director)

Council of Environmental Deans and Directors (Bruce Coull, President)

Earth Day Network (Kathleen Rogers, President)

Earth Force (Vince Meldrum, President)

Ecological Society of America (Teresa Mourad, Director of Education)

Environmental Leadership Program (Paul Sabin, Executive Director)

National Association for Interpretation (Tim Merriman, Executive Director)

National Association of Biology Teachers (Todd Carter, President)

National Association of Marine Laboratories (James Sanders, President)

National Audubon Society (Judy Braus, Vice President for Education)

National Council for Science and the Environment (Peter Saundry, Executive Director)

National Marine Sanctuary Foundation (Lori Arguelles, President and CEO)

National Science Teachers Association (Jodi Peterson, Assistant Executive Director)

National Wildlife Federation (Kevin Coyle, Vice President for Education)

North American Association for Environmental Education (Brian Day, Executive Director)

Ocean Alliance (Roger Payne, President)

Ocean Project (Bill Mott, Director)

Population Connection (Pam Wasserman, Vice President for Education)

Second Nature (Anthony Cortese, President)

Sierra Club (Martin LeBlanc, National Youth Education Director)