

United States Senate

May 22, 2025

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chair
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Moran and Ranking Member Van Hollen:

We write to thank you for your continued support of the Integrated Ocean Observing System (“IOOS”). We ask the committee to fund the authorized level of \$56 million for the Regional IOOS Program and the IOOS Program Office under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (“NOAA”) National Ocean Service in the Fiscal Year 2026 appropriations legislation.

IOOS is the nation’s leading resource for community-driven coastal, ocean, and Great Lakes information. This vital public-private partnership supports a vast network of buoys, gliders, high frequency radars, and other sensors that monitor U.S. waters. IOOS provides critical, publicly accessible data and data products that enable coastal and Great Lakes communities to protect their people, economies, and ecosystems. This efficient, reliable, and cost-effective system supports emergency preparedness, underpins a thriving blue economy, and bridges the gap between scientific research, federally certified data, and informed management.

Sustained, reliable, and accessible data are the foundation for understanding and making decisions about our coasts, oceans and Great Lakes. Our priority is to secure strong funding for the national network of 11 Regional Associations (“RAs”) that generate and deliver information tailored to the needs of a range of users, including shippers, fishermen, emergency and resources managers, tribes and native communities, public health officials, aquaculture farmers, coastal communities, weather forecasters, the Coast Guard, and the recreation industry. The RAs deploy, operate, and maintain more than 1,000 observing assets and integrate and serve data from federal and non-federal sources through federally certified regional data centers.

IOOS is a single system that supports many needs, making it a cost-effective investment for the American taxpayers. A recent study by the Center for the Blue Economy concluded that the value of the IOOS regional observing system, just to initial users, is between \$192 million and \$207 million per year, creating an economic value approximately five times greater than the current annual federal investment in the system. Further, the data and information products and services of IOOS support the safe operation of vessels which is critical to the maritime sector and contributes nearly \$5.4 trillion annually to the U.S. economy.

The IOOS program was last reauthorized in 2020 and signed into law by President Trump. Funding the bipartisan authorized level would allow for operational support and expanded engagement with users and communities, allowing IOOS to sustain services, provide new predictive capacity, and co-develop applications that support coastal and Great Lakes communities. It would also support competitive grants to drive forward high-priority initiatives and innovation across the program and partner institutions such as building additional capacity for detection and forecasting of harmful algal blooms and progress toward developing an operational National Harmful Algal Bloom Observing Network.

We ask for the Committee's support of IOOS in the FY26 appropriations bill, and we underscore the importance of funding a network that delivers crucial information about our waterways and weather to millions of Americans. Continued investment in the nation's sustained observations is key to protecting our coastal communities and unlocking the economic potential of our oceans, coasts, and Great Lakes. A well-funded IOOS furthers our understanding of this dynamic and resource-rich area as well as prepares our communities for risks associated with environmental impacts, such as damage from floods, extreme weather events, harmful algal blooms and hypoxia, and oil spills, among other hazards. Therefore, we respectfully request that the Committee provide \$56 million to the Regional IOOS Program and the IOOS Program Office.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

Bill Cassidy, M.D.

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Alex Padilla

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United States Senator

Tim Kaine

Tim Kaine
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Jeffrey A. Merkley

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United States Senator

Jack Reed

Jack Reed
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy

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Gary C. Peters

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Lisa Blunt Rochester

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United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal

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United States Senator

Edward J. Markey

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United States Senator

Andy Kim

Andy Kim
United States Senator



Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator