Ocean Conservancy®

DONATE TODAY

September 2017

Not only is summer when millions enjoy seafood, healthy oceans, and a good movie, but it's also the time when the Federal budgeting process heats up. Read on to learn more about how these connect to ocean acidification!

Sarah Cooley, Ph.D., Ocean Acidification Program Director

Congressional Corner

Over the last six months, it's been hard to miss dire predictions about the future of science funding, owing to the proposed cuts in the President's budget recommendation for FY18. Because Congress ultimately decides funding levels for federal activities, the advocacy community got to work this spring and summer reminding Members of Congress how important healthy oceans are to our nation. With Ocean Conservancy, ocean advocates like you have been instrumental in explaining the benefits of robust science funding via blogs and office visits with Members of Congress.

Dr. Joseph Salisbury (U. New Hampshire) meets with Sen. Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH). © Office of Sen. Jeanne Shaheen

Over the summer, Congress continued the process of determining government funding levels for FY18. Although the House funding bill contains cuts for NOAA that total over $700 million, **over in the Senate, appropriators largely rejected the Administration's proposed cuts to critical NOAA programs**. For NOAA's OA Program, the Senate appropriated a slight increase from the FY17 funding level of $10.5 million to $11 million, while the House trims funding nearly 4% to $10.1 million.

Looking forward, the House plans to finish approving all funding bills at the beginning of September. However, it is unlikely the Senate will do the same before the FY18 funding deadline of September 30th. As a result, it is likely that Congress will send a continuing resolution to the President that continues FY17 funding levels until mid-December. This gives Congress some extra time to work out differences between the House and Senate funding levels for the remainder of FY18.

United on the Ocean

Ocean acidification was a recurring theme at the June United Nations Ocean Conference, which sought to mobilize action towards conservation and sustainable use of the oceans and its resources. Sixty-nine organizations submitted **voluntary commitments** regarding OA, and the International Alliance to Combat Ocean Acidification held an **official side event** attended by Alliance founders Washington, Oregon, and California to discuss how U.N. nations can take action as part of the Alliance.

OA Alliance side event at U.N. Ocean Conference.
© Washington State Governor's Office Official Photo

At the same time, on World Oceans Day (June 8), African OA scientists coordinated OA sampling activities **using social media** during "OA Africa Day." With at least 33 institutions in 23 countries joining, this was a major show of the growing scientific capacity on the African continent to monitor and study OA. Sampling teams ranged in size from one or two scientists to whole teams.

West Coast ocean acidification is patchy but can be locally severe

A recently released **Oregon State University-led study** documented a persistent mosaic of OA hot spots and refuges along the West Coast. Some locations sampled exhibited the lowest surface ocean pH values reported so far anywhere, as low as 7.43. Yet seafloor and coastline topography also create areas where pH variations are consistently less severe. OSU researcher George Waldbusser pointed out in an interview that the results raise questions about what areas should be protected in our oceans—the regions most at risk? Or the areas that are holding strong against acidification? Studies like these are sure to contribute to a vigorous debate on this issue in the future.

Healthy communities are deeply invested in healthy reefs

This summer, Ocean Conservancy released a 5-minute film, **"Deeply Invested,"** focusing on the links that Florida communities have to healthy coral reefs. Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL-Miami), a longtime champion of healthy oceans and representative of several of the Florida natives featured in the film, noted during a **floor speech** in Congress, "This is not only an environmental issue, but an economic issue as well" for ocean-dependent businesses.

Deeply Invested, Ocean Conservancy's new short film.
© Benjamin Drummond/Ocean Conservancy

Maine officials press for strong ocean science research funding

Count Maine Senator Angus King as an ocean champion who is standing strong in favor of funding ocean science research. He recently asked the science community to continue researching the links among climate and acidification on Maine's lobster fishery, and has been a vocal supporter of funding NOAA's OA Program and other NOAA line items. He **noted**, "The last thing we should be doing on a federal level is cutting research funding. That is one of the most important functions of the federal government, whether it is climate change or cancer. It's how we solve problems. To cut research, and particularly to cut research when you get the feeling that the motivation is that we don't want to know, is unacceptable… Congress understands this."

Philanthropic Funders Pondering Approach to Climate Change

The environmental philanthropic community has always closely followed the latest scientific research and themes to select funding priorities. Recently, the Packard Foundation, a major ocean conservation funder, issued **a report** summarizing the landscape of giving. Inside Philanthropy notes that the report is a crash course in the most (de)pressing problems in marine conservation, but it's clear that climate change is a key issue moving forward. They further note that many questions remain surrounding the multiple stressors on the ocean, including acidification, but philanthropic groups have not been at the forefront of addressing that work.

Chasing Coral provides moving look at worldwide coral loss

You might be sitting next to a celebrity at your next coral reef conference! Numerous coral experts appeared in Chasing Coral, a new award-winning documentary directed by Jeff Orlowski and Richard Vevers, released this summer. The filmmakers set out to use time-lapse techniques to capture the long-term changes happening to coral reefs around the world. During filming, the team found that profound changes were happening so quickly that they didn't have time to troubleshoot the time-lapse equipment they'd hoped to use. With painstaking, exhausting manual methods, they captured a haunting record of corals' beautiful demise following warming, bleaching, and death. It's available on **Netflix** now. Watch it. You won't forget it.

1300 19th Street NW • 8th Floor • Washington, DC 20036 • 800-519-1541