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November 27th, 2017

The Honorable John Thune
Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson:

We are writing to express our thoughts on the nomination of Barry Myers to become the next Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), an agency that has enormous impact on the ocean and coastal environment for which Ocean Conservancy advocates and on which people and economies depend.

The public discussion surrounding Mr. Myers' nomination has focused largely on two areas of concern that are not directly related to oceans and coasts: Mr. Myers' views on privatizing functions of the National Weather Service, and his relationship with AccuWeather. Ocean Conservancy agrees these questions deserve close scrutiny by members of the U.S. Senate before Mr. Myers receives confirmation. But Ocean Conservancy would like to highlight an entirely separate line of questioning that we believe is also deserving of scrutiny: Mr. Myers' views on the ocean and coastal issues facing our nation.

Mr. Myers has an extensive background in the weather forecasting business, but on matters of ocean and coastal science and management he has no known publicly-expressed policy positions or expertise. Ocean and coastal science and management are enormous responsibilities carried by the NOAA Administrator and the American people deserve to know where Mr. Myers stands on these issues. The U.S. Senate, on behalf of all Americans, should examine Mr. Myers' beliefs, policy views, commitment to science, and his governing philosophy on important ocean and coastal matters before consenting to his confirmation.

In our view, here are key questions that should be posed to Mr. Myers:

- **NOAA's budget** - What is Mr. Myers' view on NOAA's overall budget levels? Does he support cutting programs like Sea Grant and the Coastal Zone Management Grants as the administration proposed in its 2018 budget?
- **NOAA's conservation responsibilities** – Does Mr. Myers support and commit to carry out NOAA's statutory responsibilities implementing the full suite of conservation laws, including the

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, Endangered Species Act, Marine Mammal Protection Act, Coastal Zone Management Act, and National Marine Sanctuaries Act? Does he agree that management and conservation under those laws are part of NOAA's core mission?

- **Fisheries management** – Does Mr. Myers agree that overfishing should not be allowed and that depleted fisheries should be rebuilt? Does he agree that fisheries management decisions should be based on the best available science? Will he commit to opposing any actions that would undermine these core conservation tenets?
- **The role of science at NOAA** – Does Mr. Myers support NOAA's current policies and principles on scientific integrity, including those outlined under NOAA administrative order 202-735D? Does he see a need to change those policies? Does Mr. Myers believe that NOAA-funded scientists should ever be excluded from advisory boards akin to the policies recently implemented by Administrator Pruitt at the EPA?
- **Climate change** – Does Mr. Myers concur with and stand behind the conclusion reached by NOAA scientists that climate change is happening, and that human-caused greenhouse gas emissions are largely responsible? Does he consider climate change to be a pressing problem facing the ocean, fisheries, and our coastal communities?
- **Ocean acidification** – Does Mr. Myers agree that ocean acidification is a real problem that poses an immediate economic threat to ocean and coastal industries across the U.S.? Does he support the work of the NOAA Ocean Acidification Program as authorized under the Federal Ocean Acidification Research and Monitoring (FOARAM) Act?
- **Regional coordination on ocean management** – Is Mr. Myers committed to supporting continued implementation of Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Ocean Plans and other regional, state/federal-coordinated ocean management efforts?
- **Marine sanctuaries and monuments** – What are Mr. Myers' views on protected areas like National Marine Sanctuaries and Marine National Monuments as a tool for ocean conservation? Does he agree that our nation's federally-designated ocean protected areas should remain protected?
- **Arctic** – Is Mr. Myers committed to continuing and building weather, sea, and ice monitoring and forecasting capabilities in the Arctic Ocean off Alaska? What will he do to ensure that NOAA fulfills its mandates to protect marine mammals and other protected marine resources in the Arctic Ocean given the ongoing interest in offshore drilling in those waters? Is Mr. Myers committed to continuing coordinated work with other federal agencies and tribes in the Arctic?
- **Marine debris** – Does Mr. Myers agree that marine debris is a pressing problem facing the health of our ocean? Does he support the work of NOAA's marine debris program as well as that of corporations, NGOs, and countless citizens, to reduce such pollution at its source and clean up what is already there? Does he consider this is a priority?
- **Gulf of Mexico restoration** – How does Mr. Myers plan to keep the multi-billion dollar oil spill restoration efforts in the Gulf of Mexico on track? In Mr. Myers' view, what would "success" look like for NOAA when it comes to Gulf of Mexico restoration?

This list of questions is a long one, but it's not exhaustive. There are many more questions on important ocean and coastal issues that could and should be asked.

With Texas still recovering from the impacts of Hurricane Harvey, and Florida and the Caribbean – especially Puerto Rico – still reeling from Hurricanes Irma and Maria, NOAA's relevance to our lives has never been more apparent.

NOAA's responsibilities are diverse and absolutely crucial to a functioning country. NOAA not only safeguards America's fisheries and protects iconic marine wildlife – it also conducts research that keeps our communities safe and our ocean healthy. And from tsunami and hurricane warnings to fisheries management, to the daily weather forecasts you check on your phone, NOAA plays a critical role in the lives of Americans from the coast to the heartland.

It is imperative that the Senate thoroughly vet and examine Myers' positions on the full array of issues for which Mr. Myers would be responsible if confirmed as NOAA Administrator. On behalf of Ocean Conservancy, our members, and our supporters, please consider these important ocean and coastal questions as you question the nominee and consider his confirmation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Janis", with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Janis Searles Jones
Chief Executive Officer
Ocean Conservancy