

December 4, 2017

Senator Marco Rubio  
284 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Bill Nelson  
716 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators:

The undersigned Floridians share a commitment to the health of Florida's ocean and coastal resources. As all of Florida faced the devastating impacts of Hurricane Irma, including our families and communities, we watched with particular concern the impact of the storm on our ocean resources. Irma impacted our reefs, fisheries, coastlines, beaches, and the scientific and research institutions that study and protect our ocean. We write to ask that you ensure that supplemental hurricane recovery funding support the restoration of these important resources by providing funding to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

Without the full force of our nation's premier ocean agency, the recovery effort will suffer. In Florida, the ocean economy is worth \$28 billion in GDP and employs nearly 500,000 people. The ocean and coastal resources that support these economic benefits were heavily impacted by Hurricane Irma, and NOAA has the expertise and capacity to ensure those economic benefits rebound and grow – but only if Congress provides the necessary supplemental funding. NOAA simply cannot contribute to the Irma recovery effort in a meaningful way on its already squeezed annual budget alone.

We support the funds requested for NOAA by the administration on November 17, 2017, especially funds to repair direct damages at NOAA facilities like the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, the Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, the Southeast Coastal and Ocean Observing Regional Association (SECOORA), and funds for critical work to assess and remove marine debris. However, these funds are not sufficient to meet the need across Florida.

Key additional supplemental funding needs at NOAA that Congress must fulfil include:

- Regional Coastal Resilience Grants to support state-wide efforts to build our coastlines back stronger, learn lessons from Irma, and be more prepared when the next major hurricane makes landfall in our state.
- Restoration Center and Coral Reef Conservation Program funding to address direct impacts to ocean habitats. Assessments are underway now of the damage to reefs, sea grass and other key fisheries habitat that could have long term impact on the health of Florida's commercial and recreational fisheries. Funds will be needed for restoration activities.

- Marine Mammal Stranding Network grants to assist volunteer-based groups in Florida that jumped into action in the days after the storm and continue to be busy addressing the impacts of the storm on our state's iconic wildlife.

Without supplemental funds for NOAA to support these activities, Florida will not have the comprehensive recovery we need to move forward from Hurricane Irma.

Signed,

Diana Ariza  
Miami, Florida

Alexis Blakley  
Englewood, Florida

Justin Bloom  
Executive Director  
Suncoast Waterkeeper

Tommy Cutt  
Chief Conservation Officer  
Loggerhead Marinelife Center

R. Mark Davis  
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Patricia A. DePlasco  
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Keep Collier Beautiful, Inc.