

March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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

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

Dear Chairman Wicker and Ranking Member Cantwell:

We are writing to express our thoughts on the nomination of Dr. Neil Jacobs 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.

Ocean Conservancy would like to highlight a line of questioning that we believe is deserving of scrutiny: Dr. Jacobs' views on the ocean and coastal issues facing our nation.

Dr. Jacobs has an extensive background in the weather forecasting business, but on matters of ocean and coastal science and management we know little about his 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 Dr. Jacobs stands on these issues. The U.S. Senate, on behalf of all Americans, should examine Dr. Jacobs' 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 Dr. Jacobs:

- **NOAA's budget** - What is Dr. Jacobs' 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 2021 budget?
- **NOAA's conservation responsibilities** – Does Dr. Jacobs 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 Dr. Jacobs 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 Dr. Jacobs 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 Dr. Jacobs believe that NOAA-funded scientists should ever be excluded from advisory boards akin to the policies implemented by the EPA?
- **Climate change** – Does Dr. Jacobs 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 Dr. Jacobs 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 Dr. Jacobs 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 Dr. Jacobs’ 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 Dr. Jacobs 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 Dr. Jacobs committed to continuing coordinated work with other federal agencies and tribes in the Arctic?
- **Marine debris** – Does Dr. Jacobs 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 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 Dr. Jacobs plan to keep the multi-billion dollar oil spill restoration efforts in the Gulf of Mexico on track? In Dr. Jacobs’ view, what would “success” look like for NOAA when it comes to Gulf of Mexico restoration?

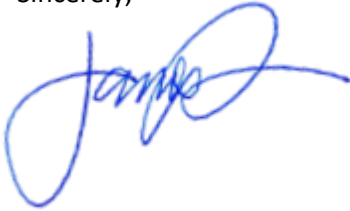
This list of questions is a long one, but it’s not exhaustive. There are many more questions on important ocean and coastal issues that could and should be asked.

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 Dr. Jacobs' positions on the full array of issues for which he will 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