

May 9, 2018

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

RE: FY 2020 NOAA Program Funding

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As the Department undertakes development of the FY 2020 budget, the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA), the unified and collective voice of the seaport industry in the Americas, is writing to strongly support funding the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Navigation, Observations, and Positioning programs. We urge you to support these essential federal programs within NOAA's National Ocean Service as well as its marine weather forecasting capabilities, including the National Data Buoy Center of NOAA's National Weather Service. We also urge you to support operations and maintenance for NOAA's aging hydrographic fleet and to ensure NOAA's current and future investments in new vessels include new hydrographic vessels.

One particular area of concern remains the chronic underfunding for operations and maintenance of NOAA's Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System or "PORTS." The Administration's FY 2019 request is again far short of meeting federal responsibilities. We seek an additional \$10 million for the PORTS program – \$2 million for system modernization and further development and \$8 million for full federal maintenance of the system currently being inconsistently funded. This program is vital to the safe navigation of federal waters and channels and our international competitiveness. It is a vital source of trusted real-time information available to mariners and pilots on specific channel conditions that enables safety and efficiency decisions to be made with confidence and keeps our seaports moving.

We appreciate your recognition of the critical importance of ports and their vital role in the U.S. transportation system and economy. Please let us know whenever AAPA and our member ports may be of any assistance.

Thank you in advance for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



Kurt Nagle
President & CEO

cc: Rich Edwing, National Ocean Service