

CAMPAIGN FOR ENVIRONMENTAL LITERACY

April xx, 2011

Dr. Jane Lubchenco
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW, Room 5128
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Jacob J. Lew
Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Lubchenco and Director Lew:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters across the country, we thank you for your past support of environmental literacy and urge you to maintain funding for the NOAA's **Environmental Literacy Grants (ELG)** Program at the fiscal year 2010 level of \$14 million in NOAA's fiscal year 2011 spending plan to Congress. We further request that funding for **Bay-Watershed Education and Training (B-WET)** programs be increased to \$11 million from \$10 million to enable NOAA to continue expansion of the B-WET program (as directed by Congress in prior Appropriations bills) to include the Great Lakes region (as called for in the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative plans) without diminishing funding for existing B-WET programs. Authority for these programs is provided by the America COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 (Public Law No: 111-358 Section 302).

We understand that you must make very difficult choices as a result of the fiscal year 2011 CR passed by Congress. Yet in times of economic crisis, it has been well proven that investing in education and innovation - in human capital - is without a doubt the best investment that can be made in long-term, across-the-board economic growth. As is increasingly recognized by business leaders, environmental literacy provides critical knowledge for a 21st Century clean energy economy by equipping students with the skills to understand complex environmental issues, thus enabling them both to make better informed decisions as citizens and to help find solutions for the challenges facing our nation. Studies have also clearly demonstrated that environmental literacy is key to improving student achievement in STEM (science, technology engineering, and math) education, to creating a stronger economy through green jobs, and to promoting environmental stewardship (a key objective in all of NOAA's strategic plans).

The demand from the education community for ELG funds is huge: only about 3% of ELG applications are able to be funded. The full impacts of the ELG program are significant, including:

- more than 20 million people who have accessed compelling up-to-date weather, atmospheric, and ocean information through the Science on a Sphere and Ocean Today Kiosk,
- 8,000 teachers annually who receive training in STEM concepts related to environmental literacy as well as access to the most accurate scientific information on climate, corals and hurricanes,
- 2,600,000 students who benefit from more highly qualified teachers in STEM fields each year, and
- 300 jobs which are fully or partially supported by these grants.

The B-WET program as you know supports locally relevant, experiential learning in the K-12 environment, with the purpose of increasing understanding of how the quality of the watershed affects the lives of the people who live in it. B-WET supports programs for students as well as professional development for teachers, while supporting regional education and conservation priorities. The impacts of the BWET program include:

- 120 projects funded in six regions of the country, impacting 21 states, and
- More than 57,000 students and 2,400 teachers and community leaders reached each year.

These programs have enabled NOAA, as the nation's leading expert on weather, coastal and ocean information, to partner with the nation's top non-profit organizations and educators to put this information to good use while helping to fulfill NOAA's stewardship mandate. They have demonstrated their effectiveness, as well as their value to stakeholder communities. And as our nation begins to grapple with the complexities and challenges of diminishing ocean, coastal and watershed resources, they are timely and highly relevant.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests. If you have any questions about this letter, please contact James Elder of the Campaign for Environmental Literacy, at 978-526-7768, or elder@FundEE.org, or Danielle Moodie-Mills of the National Wildlife Federation at (202) 797-6634.

Sincerely,

National and Regional Organizations:

American Forest Foundation
Associations of Zoos and Aquariums
Campaign for Environmental Literacy
Earth Day Network
National Audubon Society
National Wildlife Federation
Sierra Club

State and Local Organizations: