

**Center for Biological Diversity \* Climate Hawks Vote \* Earthjustice \* Friends of the Earth  
Greenpeace USA \* League of Conservation Voters \* Marine Conservation Institute  
Natural Resources Defense Council \* Oceana \* Pacific Environment \* Sierra Club**

October 23, 2017

Dear Senator,

We are writing to express our concern about the nomination of Barry Myers, the chief executive of AccuWeather, to become the next Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Mr. Myers has no scientific credentials or experience with many critical parts of NOAA's mission relating to oceans and coasts; has supported efforts to privatize many functions of the National Weather Service (NWS)<sup>1</sup> which would adversely affect its vital public safety mission; and has personal and family financial conflicts of interests with the work of NWS.<sup>2</sup> We would urge that questions be posed to Mr. Myers to ascertain whether he has the qualifications necessary to do this important job, and whether the American public could be confident, if confirmed, that he would use his public office to advance the important science, conservation, and public safety mission of the agency. As the nation grapples with the catastrophic impacts of this year's hurricane season, it seems particularly unwise to support a candidate for NOAA Administrator who has no government experience, and who has previously supported limiting the capabilities of NOAA.

Science is the bedrock of NOAA's mission. Eleven out of twelve previous NOAA Administrators, appointed by Republican and Democratic presidents alike, have all held PhDs. We acknowledge that Mr. Myers, a lawyer by training, is an accomplished businessman. We are concerned, however, that he both lacks a scientific background and has no experience with the many of the critical high impact issues that comprise NOAA's work.

NOAA is the agency that is responsible for countless issues related to our nation's oceans and coasts, from marine commerce to fisheries management to coastal restoration. NOAA's role in ensuring that we have sustainable seafood and fish populations, and healthy coasts and oceans cannot be understated. Almost 40 percent of the country's population lives in coastal shoreline counties. These counties contribute \$6.6 trillion to the U.S. economy.<sup>3</sup> Countless communities rely on NOAA to support the productivity and sustainability of our coasts and oceans through science-based programs. An Administrator does not need to be an expert in all NOAA's programs related to oceans and coasts, but

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<sup>1</sup> Barry Myers and his brother Joel have previously supported legislation that would heavily restrict NWS's ability to make its data publicly available, restricting its availability to corporations. See [this](#) Washington Post story and [this](#) 2005 Lawrence-Journal World article; the legislation is [S. 786](#) of the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. (All accessed 10/12/2017.)

<sup>2</sup> Barry [is currently CEO](#) of Accuweather, a company that uses NWS data in its commercial products. One of his brothers, Joel Myers [is the president and founder](#) of the company. His other brother, Evan Myers, [is COO](#) of Accuweather. All three, and Accuweather itself, [are members](#) of the American Weather and Climate Industry Association, the weather industry trade association. (All accessed 10/12/2017.)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.noaa.gov/oceans-coasts> Accessed 10/12/17

Mr. Myers appears to have little or no experience with any of them. We urge you to ask Mr. Myers about his approach to and commitment to NOAA's coastal and ocean programs in detail.

In the one area that Mr. Myers has a background, weather forecasting, his background is troubling. Mr. Myers has long advocated for essentially privatizing and monetizing for private benefit some of the important work of the National Weather Service. It is important to remember that NOAA was created in 1970 to bring together smaller agencies that all focused on the oceans and the atmosphere to provide a wide range of services to the public using shared and leveraged resources and tools. All of NOAA's important ocean conservation and fisheries management work relies on shared data collection networks of satellites, ships, buoys, and sensors around the globe, and on shared research capabilities. Mr. Myers has continued to voice the position over the years that the private sector should take over many of these functions, and has frequently chided NOAA officials when they develop new products or tools that can help the public or public officials plan and prepare for severe weather or flooding events. This view about the role of government science and government services is disturbing and would also be deeply disturbing if applied more broadly across NOAA's oceans, fisheries, climate, and science portfolios. We hope you will explore Mr. Myers intentions and obtain commitments from him, should he be confirmed, that he will not interfere with or disable NOAA's vital missions.

Mr. Myers' past support for limiting access to public data is particularly concerning given that NOAA's mission is to answer scientific questions and "to share that knowledge and information with others."<sup>4</sup> For example, the agency's "Tides & Currents" website<sup>5</sup> provides coastal communities with the data and analyses they need to deal with present-day coastal flooding made worse by sea level rise. Data from Tides & Currents and NOAA's other scientific efforts are collected at Climate.gov, the most comprehensive and authoritative public source available of raw climate data, trends, and record-breaking extremes. Climate.gov helps inform public understanding of climate change, arms educators with credible and up-to-date information, and feeds into science-based decision making at all levels of government. We urge that you ask Mr. Myers for a firm commitment to maintain the quality and public accessibility of Climate.gov and all of NOAA's other important public information and data sites and services.

Finally, we are also concerned that if Mr. Myers were confirmed as NOAA Administrator he would have profound conflicts of interest. AccuWeather is a privately held family company. Every decision Mr. Myers would make about NOAA's organization, budget, management, and capabilities would have the potential to enrich his family's company, in the short term and the long term. We support NOAA's mission of science, service and stewardship and believe that its activities should be administered in the public interest.

We urge the Senate to carefully consider all the issues surrounding this nominee to protect the critical work all Americans expect and need from NOAA.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.noaa.gov/our-mission-and-vision>

<sup>5</sup> [https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/sea\\_level\\_info.html](https://tidesandcurrents.noaa.gov/sea_level_info.html)

Sincerely,

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Earthjustice  
Friends of the Earth  
Greenpeace USA  
League of Conservation Voters  
Marine Conservation Institute  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Oceana  
Pacific Environment  
Sierra Club