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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3303

November 7, 2013

Dr. Louis W. Uccellini
National Weather Service
1325 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Uccellini:

I am writing to request your assistance with maintaining a data buoy located off the coast of my Eastern North Carolina congressional district.

Buoy 41036 is located off Jacksonville, North Carolina. It is the only remaining ocean observing platform in northern Onslow Bay, and it is important to federal, state and local stakeholders. The buoy provides valuable meteorological and oceanographic data to National Weather Service (NWS) offices in Morehead City and Wilmington, NC, to the U.S. Coast Guard, to fishermen and boaters, and to Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune. Base officials use data from the buoy for sea training activities, operational flight planning, and to model storm impacts to base land and training facility resources.

Data from buoy 41036 are freely available to the public and can be accessed via the University of North Carolina Wilmington (www.cormp.org & <http://carolinascoos.org>), from NOAA's National Data Buoy Center (NDBC) (www.noaa.ndbc.gov), and through fishing and boating websites. The buoy's value is demonstrated by the number of users who access this information. In 2013, over 134,000 unique users have accessed buoy information via the NDBC website. In addition, operators of the fishing website www.FryingPanTower.com, report that between 30,000 and 40,000 unique users generate 32,000,000 "hits" on this buoy annually.

The Coastal Ocean Research and Monitoring Program (CORMP) at the University of North Carolina Wilmington enabled construction and deployment of buoy 41036 in 2005 via transfer of funds to the National Data Buoy Center (approximately \$240,000) from a NOAA award to UNCW. Since then, CORMP has provided the \$40,000 annual maintenance fee as well as ship time needed to maintain the buoy. However, the program is no longer able to support the annual maintenance fee (now \$60,000) to keep the buoy operational. UNCW has been notified that the NDBC plans to decommission the buoy and return it to NDBC headquarters.

I would like to meet with you to discuss all possibilities for retaining buoy 41036 in its current location. I understand that one option to make this happen would be for the buoy to be reclassified from a "sponsored" buoy to a "federal backbone" buoy with responsibility for ongoing operation of the buoy being transferred to NDBC. Other options could include alternative funding mechanisms or service arrangements.

I look forward to working with you on this important issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Walter B. Jones

Walter B. Jones
Member of Congress