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

March 31, 2014

Chairman Frank R. Wolf  
House Subcommittee on  
Commerce, Justice and Science  
H-309, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Chaka Fatah  
House Subcommittee on  
Commerce, Justice and Science  
1016 Longworth Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Fatah:

**We are writing to request your assistance in rejecting the unjustified and misguided proposal in the Department of Commerce's fiscal year 2015 budget request to close the NOAA marine lab in Beaufort, North Carolina.**

The federal government has operated the Beaufort marine lab for over a century. It is the only government research center between New Jersey and Miami studying Atlantic fish populations. In fact, the lab is uniquely situated in the heart of one of the most diverse marine ecosystems in the nation – a place which constitutes the northern range of southern fish species and the southern range of northern species.

Surrounded by the marine labs of Duke University, North Carolina State University and the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, the NOAA Beaufort lab is one of a select few hubs of ocean research in the country. It has generated valuable research on many of the most important marine science questions of our time, including sustainable fisheries; conservation of sea turtles, dolphins, seagrass estuaries and offshore reefs; algal blooms; invasive species; and changes in climate/sea levels. In addition to its scientific value, the lab also has great economic value. The lab employs over 100 people, and in conjunction with the other labs in the area, it is estimated that marine science injects \$58 million into the local economy.

NOAA is attempting to justify their proposal<sup>4</sup> by suggesting that the lab “requires infrastructure repairs and improvements exceeding agency budget resources now and for the foreseeable future.” In order to ascertain the merit of their claim, we asked the agency to provide a ‘rack-and-stack’ of maintenance costs at each of its marine labs nationwide. We presume the agency did such an analysis prior to making their proposal. However, we have yet to receive that analysis, and frankly, we question whether one was ever completed.

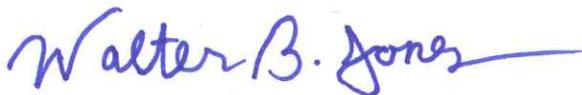
The proposal is even more suspect when considering that NOAA has invested roughly \$14 million in upgrades to the facility in recent years, including a new administrative building in 2006, as well as a new bridge to the island on which the lab is located. Furthermore, an engineering report has showed the facility to be structurally sound.

With that in mind, we respectfully request that the subcommittee include the following language in its 2015 bill:

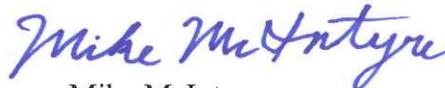
*“None of the funds in this act may be used for the relocation or consolidation of any laboratory facility or personnel within the National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science.”*

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



Walter B. Jones  
Member of Congress



Mike McIntyre  
Member of Congress