



The Watch

Capt. Dave Monti, Chairman



The RISAA Legislative Committee's mission is to provide, in partnership with the Affiliated Clubs, a forum for improving the knowledge and understanding of fishery-related and government issues that affect recreational anglers. An informed membership encourages involvement and advocacy. The Legislative Committee will strive to advocate responsible fishery decision.

The Committee is comprised of RISAA Members and delegates from the Affiliated Clubs. The Committee meets two or three times a year, depending on the number of fishery and/or legislative issues that develop.

Fishing law of the nation and NOAA budget under attack

Last month there was talk about bills in Congress designed to weaken the intent of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA), the fishing law of our nation, and conflicting information about President Trump's budget and its impact on NOAA, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and the fish.

The MSA has successfully rebuilt over 40 species. It needs to remain strong so it can continue to manage the fish for the benefit all and not special interest groups or individual states. Additionally, NOAA needs to be funded at a level that allows fish managers to explore, develop and enact new and better ways of collecting and analyzing data with the backdrop of an ever changing ocean due to climate change and its impact on fish and fish movement.

Early last month, Wilbur L. Ross, Jr., the new U.S. Secretary of Commerce (NOAA is managed by the Department of Commerce (DOC) addressed employees when he first arrived with some encouraging news i.e. launching of more weather satellites for NOAA, a commitment to obtain maximum sustainable yield for fisheries, and a goal of improved timelines, accuracy, breadth and depth of DOC data output.

This encouraging news was followed by the release of President Trump's 2018 budget that has devastated the scientific community in this country. Article headlines from the *Washington Post* to *Science Magazine* have been quite alarming including, "Proposed budget for Commerce would cut funds for NOAA", "NOAA Sea Grant program lead list of cuts", "Trump budget cut could be devastating for NOAA Scientist in Boulder", "Trump's budget would hammer climate program at EPA, NASA, NOAA, and the Department of Energy", and "Trump's budget is everything scientists have been fearing."

Brad Plumer on Vox.com said, "What's clear is that Trump wants the US government to pull back sharply from any effort to stop global warming, adapt to its impacts — or even study it further. That includes eliminating much of the work the Environmental Protection Agency is doing to research climate impacts and limit emissions. It includes scaling back the Department of Energy's efforts to accelerate low-carbon energy. It also includes cuts to NASA's Earth-monitoring programs. The proposal would also eliminate the Sea Grant program at NOAA, which helps coastal communities adapt to a warmer world."

The President's budget outline mainly offers top-line budget parameters for agencies but little detail. A detailed budget will be offered by the White House in May on how it would like to

fund and/or cut programs. The congress then votes on proposals approving or rejecting them.

All of this is very concerning as fisheries management relies heavily on science and research for data collection, the impact of climate change on fish and eco-systems and much, much, more.

Here are some budget cut highlights that impact the fish, fishing communities, eco-system based management and climate change work.

First, NOAA's Sea Grant program used by 33 states to provide grants to help coastal communities deal with the challenges of climate change would be eliminated. This is not good news for New England States in particular. This is not a budget reduction, but a program eliminated.

"Including Sea Grant, Trump's budget would eliminate \$250 million in NOAA programs for coastal management." said Plumer.

In Rhode Island the Sea Grant Program is a federal-state-university partnership, based at the University of Rhode Island that designs and supports research, outreach, and education programs that foster coastal and marine stewardship.

The Rhode Island Program focuses its efforts in two core thematic areas: Sustainable Coastal Communities & Ecosystems (SUCCESS) and Sustainable Fisheries.

Programs they are presently engaged in have helped aquaculture expand in RI, helped to mitigate beach erosion through use of offshore deposits, an initiative that addresses Rhode Island Marine Trades industry workforce skill gaps, and studies that explore the social impacts of ocean wind farms with the aim of encouraging ocean wind farm development in Rhode Island and the east coast.

Rhode Island Sea Grant for the next two years planned to place emphasis on improved understanding of shellfish (bivalve and gastropod) stock assessment and population dynamics with resource management implications. Additional, plans called for a focus to study the impacts of changing climate on finfish and shellfish population dynamics in Rhode Island waters, with special interest on Narragansett Bay species and fisheries. All of this work would be eliminated.

In addition to eliminating the Sea Grant program cuts include a 31% cut of the EPA's budget, from \$8.2 billion to \$5.7 billion. This include zeroing out funds for many climate programs, including the agency work to monitor and reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as their Energy Star program, the voluntary program that helps companies to produce energy efficient products. **(to page 36)**