

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

U.S. Federal Administration's Budget for 2018

Linda E. Duguay

I had thought that I would be writing my August Presidential message to you about professional development, member services, or even the issue of dual careers—about those who met in graduate school or even as undergraduates and try to pursue careers in the same field in academia, the public or private sector. These are all things I am very interested in and supportive of increasing ASLO's efforts to improve services in these three areas. Hopefully, I will get to these topics in the coming year.

Instead, I am writing this article the week that the Administration of President Trump released its 2018 budget on 23rd May. I have tried to be optimistic over the year as you have read in my columns about transitions to a new Administration and what it would mean to aquatic sciences. I must admit I was not exactly optimistic back in March based on what the Administration requested in the continuing resolution for 2017 and the "Blueprint Preview" for 2018. Thankfully, a continuing resolution was passed for 2017 which fully funded most of what the Obama Administration's budget had originally proposed and avoided the sharp cuts or elimination of certain programs in 2017 that the current administration had requested.

In fact, the budget released on May 23 is truly worse than many of us had ever imagined with an average of 10–30% cuts (including elimination of major programs) for most Science related agencies (NSF, NOAA, DOE, EPA, USGS, NASA). They have even reduced various STEM education programs at NOAA, NASA, and NSF.

Some highlights—or perhaps better put—lowlights of the proposed budget for 2018—(% listed is down from 2017)

NSF (11% overall)—10.6% for Geosciences but 20% for U.S. Global Change Research Program, 7.1 % Biological Sciences, and 13% for Education and Human Resources—reducing graduate fellowships awarded annually by 50%.

NOAA (16% overall)—elimination of the National Sea Grant Program, National Estuarine Reserve System Program, Coastal Zone

Management Grants, Coastal Zone Act, and NOAA Office of Education to name just a few.

USGS (15% overall)—reductions in the USGS core science systems programs, climate and land use programs, and the natural hazard program which includes coastal and marine hazards,

DOE Office of Science—(9% overall)—but a 43% decrease for the Biological and Environmental Science Research Program

EPA—(30% overall)—Science and Technology Program down 37%, elimination of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, Chesapeake Bay Program and the Puget Sound Program.

NASA—(the least at 3% overall)—8.7% for Earth Sciences and elimination of Earth Science Missions and Instruments related to climate science.

I stopped writing this column (for a bit) to draft a letter with Adrienne Sponberg, our Director of Communications and Science, with additional input from Past-President Elser and President-Elect Pace to all of our members which we sent out on May 30th. It was primarily directed at our U.S.A. members but these budget reductions to our science agencies and programs will also impact our ability to interact with our international colleagues and will have global repercussions. Indeed, President Trump just returned from the G7 Conference in Brussels and announced the withdrawal of the U.S. from the Paris Climate Accords.

The message we sent out on the 30th was primarily a **call for action** to energize our U.S. membership that, in the event they were not supportive of the budget cuts, they needed to reach out to their elected congressional representatives. It is the U.S. Congress who has the final budget authority to provide the funding for all these Federal agencies and their programs. They are our representatives and our direct voice in the government and they need to hear how important and critical the Federal investment in science is to their own districts and the U.S. economy overall.

Hopefully many of you took action and so did your Federal Representative and by the time this column is published in August, the budget prospects for these science programs will have greatly improved. I know many if not most of the scientific societies with members in the areas that will be affected by the budget cuts have reached out to their members, to the Appropriation Committees in the House and Senate, and directly to the Administration. It is not just the aquatic sciences that have been

cut but health and agricultural sciences as well. So, many voices are reaching out and hopefully they will be heard and the Congress will act to protect their investments in science and continue them into the future.

As always I am trying to stay optimistic—but as the Director of a Sea Grant Program for the last 17 yr and just at the end of the Celebration of Sea Grant's 50 Year Anniversary—it is hard to see a budget line that just eliminates the program. So much excellent coastal and Great Lakes research has been supported and accomplished by the 33 programs—all partnerships between NOAA, the States and the Universities that host the programs. Sea Grant matches 1 dollar for every 2 dollars provided by the Federal Government through NOAA. In 2015 an analysis of the programs indicated that the Sea Grant Programs funded at \$67.3 million dollars delivered an economic return of \$575 million in economic impact for the coasts and Great Lakes or an 854% return on Federal investment. Hopefully, the program will be reinstated. Just as we have asked ASLO members to do, the Sea Grant Network has energized our stakeholders, supporters, students and researchers to reach out to their congressional representatives. The elimination of Sea Grant did happen during the political cycle several years back in the 90s before my time as a Director but a bi-partisan coalition provided the needed support to keep the programs going. Hopefully this will again be the story for Sea Grant and many if not most of the other programs proposed to be drastically cut or eliminated.

Your ASLO Board, Staff and Committees are always working on your behalf to keep ASLO strong and to communicate the global importance and benefit of the Aquatic Sciences. As I have always wrapped up my columns during my first year as your President, I ask to hear from you on your views and issues as to how we can strengthen ASLO and the Aquatic Sciences. I encourage you to send a note to President@aslo.org. I do want to hear your thoughts and keep you all engaged and energized.



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