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Former NOAA Officials File Scientific Integrity Complaint over Trump Attacks on Weather Forecasters

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Three former high-ranking NOAA officials [filed an official complaint yesterday](#) asking for a comprehensive investigation into multiple violations of the NOAA Scientific Integrity Policy. “Recent actions to censor NWS scientists put public safety at risk, are inconsistent with NOAA’s scientific integrity principles, violate the public trust, and compromise the independence and reliability of the National Weather Service.”

The complaint comes after NOAA leaders [muzzled NWS scientists](#) and [rebuked the Birmingham weather service office](#) for clarifying that Hurricane Dorian

would *not* hit Alabama. President Trump previously tweeted that the storm was headed for Alabama, prompting concern among Alabama residents.


Signatories to the complaint include former NOAA Administrator Jane Lubchenco, former NOAA Chief Scientist Rick Spinrad, and former NOAA Deputy Director of the National Marine Fisheries Service Andrew Rosenberg (who is now at UCS).

The [NOAA scientific integrity policy](#) is one of the strongest in government: it explicitly prohibits misrepresentation of science, empowers scientists to speak publicly about their work without asking for permission, and gives scientists the right to review press releases and other statements that rely primarily on their work. All three of these principles were violated over the past two weeks.

NOAA Chief Scientist Craig McLean previously said that [he would investigate circumstances behind the press release](#) that attacked the Birmingham office’s work. The three former officials wanted to be sure that the investigation was comprehensive to include other potential violations. “We will consider this a formal allegation of scientific misconduct under NOAA NAO 202-735D Scientific Integrity,” responded NOAA Scientific Integrity Officer Cynthia Decker.

The New York Times [reported today](#) that the directive to rebuke the scientists was communicated to NOAA by White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulveney through Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross. The *Washington Post* [subsequently reported](#) that the order came directly from President Trump.

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