

RE: Form letter for potential NOAA NERRS Budget Cuts

Dear XXX –

As a representative for Alabama, you know how important our coast is to the identity of this state. The fish, beaches, rivers, swamps, gators and birds all make up part of our character as citizens of this unique place. The recent document from the Office of Budget and Management that showed a potential 18% cut to NOAA funding would threaten many of the things we value on our Alabama shores. One of the programs selected for a 100% federal funding cut is the National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS).

There are 29 NERR sites around the United States and Puerto Rico, including one right here in Alabama at Weeks Bay, in Baldwin County. In addition, there are Reserves in Grand Bay Mississippi, Apalachicola Florida, Rookery Bay Florida, and Mission Aransas Texas. These Gulf Coast Reserves focus on the issues most critical to our Gulf fisheries, storm resilience, and shoreline protection.

- Every year, programs offered at the Weeks Bay Reserve and the 28 other reserves attract more than a half a million students, educators, and visitors. **Approximately 8,000 people visited our Weeks Bay Reserve in 2016.**
- Decision makers from more than 2,500 cities and towns and 570 businesses benefit by reserve-based science and technical expertise nationwide each year. **At Weeks Bay Reserve, we reached 279 coastal decision makers, accumulating 1,732 training hours**, last year to offer science-based information on a variety of issues essential to coastal communities.
- Reserves educate approximately 85,000 students and 3,200 teachers nationwide each year. In Alabama **we have reached over 10,000 K-12 students over the last 10 years.**

The Weeks Bay Reserve is funded through both NOAA and ADCNR State Lands Division. The NOAA portion of the Reserve funding makes up 70% of the total Reserve budget. Without this funding, the Reserve would have to dramatically cut its research, stewardship, and education programs. As a concerned constituent, **I am asking you to oppose any Fiscal Year 2018 NOAA budget that would result in a funding cut for the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.**

Thank you for your time and for taking into consideration the importance of the National Reserve System and our local Weeks Bay Reserve.

Sincerely,

Signature:

Name:

Address: