

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 28, 2025

Vice Admiral Nancy Hann
Deputy Under Secretary for Operations
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
1305 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Vice Admiral Secretary Hann,

This letter is to express our serious concerns with the recent layoffs announced by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). As Co-Chairs of the Great Lakes Task Force, we are particularly concerned by the impact these staff reductions will have on the Great Lakes.

We have learned that at least 15 probationary employees at the NOAA Great Lakes Environmental Research Lab (GLERL) in Ann Arbor, Michigan, were fired as part of the ongoing wave of government-wide layoffs. We have heard directly from those who were terminated, and they are distraught about what this means for the future of the lab and for the Great Lakes in general.

The work conducted at GLERL is critical to the health and preservation of the Great Lakes, which are an invaluable natural resource in our region and to our nation at large. The laboratory's research plays an essential role in understanding and mitigating the effects of severe weather, pollution, invasive species, and other threats to the ecosystem. The loss of experienced scientists, researchers, and support staff at GLERL threatens to undermine the effectiveness of ongoing studies and disrupt critical work that supports regional environmental management and policy decisions.

The Great Lakes are not only vital to the biodiversity and ecological health of our nation but also support the livelihood of millions of people in the surrounding areas. The research and innovations that come out of GLERL help safeguard our water resources, inform sustainable practices, and drive conservation efforts across the region. The recent layoffs jeopardize the continuity and depth of this work and could have long-term repercussions for the future of the Great Lakes and the communities that depend on them.

Furthermore, these layoffs extend beyond GLERL and have broader implications for NOAA's critical weather services. Reductions in staffing and research capacity directly impact NOAA's ability to provide timely and accurate weather warnings and are in contravention of congressional direction provided repeatedly in annual appropriations laws. With extreme weather events becoming more frequent and severe, the role of NOAA in issuing weather warnings and

providing vital information to the public is more important than ever. A reduction in personnel and resources could delay or undermine these crucial services, leaving communities vulnerable in the face of storms, tornados, hurricanes, and other natural disasters. This could result in the loss of life and property due to late or delayed warnings.

We urge you to reconsider the recent staffing cuts and explore alternative measures that could allow NOAA to retain these essential positions, particularly within GLERL and its broader weather and environmental research teams. The expertise and knowledge of these professionals are irreplaceable and crucial to preserving the health of the Great Lakes, ensuring accurate weather forecasting, and maintaining NOAA's commitment to public safety.

We remain deeply concerned that our region will be adversely affected by these staff reductions. To ensure that the quality of storm warning and Great Lakes Scientific studies are not compromised, please provide answers to the following questions within one month of receipt of this letter:

1. How many staffers have been terminated by NOAA? Please provide a breakdown of the staff terminations at each laboratory and office.
2. What is the role of the GLERL and how does it support NOAA in meeting its objectives?
3. What were the roles and responsibilities of those who were terminated?
4. GLERL plays a leading role in forecasting harmful algal blooms on Lake Erie which is provided in real-time to water utilities who draw water from the Lake. These forecasts are used to ensure appropriate treatments are applied to provide clean drinking water. Will these forecasts be impacted by these terminations?
5. GLERL provides real-time ice and water current forecasts and projections that mariners depend on to safely navigate the Great Lakes. Will these products be impacted?
6. Please provide a detailed list of the projects those who were terminated were working on. What work will go undone in their absence? How will you ensure this will not undermine any of the research of GLERL?
7. GLERL is conducting critical work to limit the introduction, spread, and impact of invasive species. How will you ensure staff terminations will not contribute to invasive species entering the Great Lakes?
8. Which projects/research objectives will now be delayed if these cuts are not reversed?
9. As our communities continue to experience severe weather events, how long should our constituents expect in delays to the warning systems because of fewer employees at NOAA?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress