

Opening Statement
The Honorable Madeleine Z. Bordallo
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife
Wednesday, February 24, 2010
Oversight Hearing on the President's Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Requests for the
United States Office of Insular Affairs and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration

Today's hearing focuses on the budget request for two agencies within the Subcommittee's jurisdiction - the Office of Insular Affairs and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. This afternoon we will address the many challenges facing these agencies given their respective budget realities.

Before we begin, I would note that our hearing had originally planned to cover the budget request for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which will now be held next week. As everyone here knows, however, the Director of the Service, the Honorable Sam D. Hamilton, passed away last Saturday, and his funeral services are being held today. On behalf of myself, Mr. Brown, and the entire Committee, I would like to express my deepest condolences to the family and friends of Director Hamilton and to all of his colleagues at the Fish and Wildlife Service. While I only had the chance to meet the Director once, many on my staff knew him well and had only the greatest respect and admiration for him.

It is clear from the outpouring of tributes we have seen this week that everyone who worked with him during his three plus decades of public service had similar respect and admiration. While his loss will be felt by many, both personally and professionally, his lifelong commitment to conservation and restoration of some of the Nation's most important species and ecosystems will clearly serve as his legacy. That legacy will inspire those who knew him, and even those who did not, to carry on his vision for our fish and wildlife long into the future. Again, our prayers go out to his family and friends who I hope are comforted by the knowledge, as Secretary Salazar said, that his work has left an indelible mark on the lands and wildlife we all cherish.

Turning to today's business, President Obama has proposed a Fiscal Year 2011 budget of \$457.7 million for the Office of Insular Affairs, of which \$87 million is requested in current appropriations. This amount is \$22.8 million below the 2010 enacted level but \$34.4 million more than the President requested for OIA last year.

Programs funded under the 2011 budget request will continue long-term efforts by OIA throughout the territories and the freely associated states to address economic and fiscal needs. Importantly, \$24.1 million is requested for a variety of discretionary Technical Assistance activities. Included within this requested amount is \$5 million for a new technical assistance initiative to be known as "Empowering Insular Communities." We look forward to learning more today about this particular initiative, as well as the

Administration's strategies overall to strengthen foundations for economic development in the insular areas, while aiding the preservation of their cultural and natural heritage.

Although the 2011 OIA budget request is below the current year's level, I recognize the Administration's efforts to prioritize its assistance to respond to several of the key needs and challenges facing our island communities. One area that I am concerned about is the lack of directed funding towards critical infrastructure improvements on Guam in preparation for the military buildup in this year's budget. It is important that the White House provide a clear funding strategy and remain supportive in their efforts on this issue.

While the Administration's total request for NOAA in Fiscal Year 2011 is \$806.1 million more than was enacted in 2010, the oceans and water-related line offices have proposed cuts totaling \$28.2 million. While I am encouraged by requests for funding to support coastal and marine spatial planning and regional ocean partnerships, I remain deeply concerned by the Administration's prioritization of increased funding for catch shares at the expense of fundamental needs for fisheries data collection and observers that will be critical to developing fisheries management plans based on sound science that the fishing industry, and everyone else, can have confidence in.

With that, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and more deeply into many of these issues.