

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

February 14, 2012

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our strong opposition to the proposal in your Fiscal Year 2013 Budget to close the NOAA Fisheries Service James J. Howard Marine Sciences Laboratory at Sandy Hook, New Jersey. The closure of this lab would have a negative impact on NOAA's ability to carry out its mission and damage progress that has been made in fisheries-based scientific research.

The NOAA laboratory, dedicated in September 1961, was the first federal scientific laboratory devoted solely to research on marine recreational species. The opening of this lab reflected the importance of acquiring scientific information to support the sustainability of marine resources that are greatly important to coastal communities. Today, the research that is performed at the NOAA lab produces vital information on marine species that serves as a foundation for our economy and jobs across the region.

The NOAA laboratory at Sandy Hook performs critical research that not only supports New Jersey marine habitats, but also provides greater insight into the issues our nation faces in maintaining a clean and sustainable ocean environment. The decision to close the NOAA laboratory will put all of this critical research at risk and limit our understanding of how we can best protect the ocean environment and the ocean-based economy.

This past September, NOAA staff including Assistant Administrator for NOAA Fisheries Eric Schwaab celebrated 50 years of important achievements made at the NOAA laboratory at Sandy Hook. Now, just a few short months later, your budget proposes to put an end to the important work that is done at the lab.

We will work to prevent the closure of this facility during the upcoming appropriations process and we ask that you reconsider your position. The NOAA laboratory at Sandy Hook is a vital facility and maintaining it will allow the important scientific research that is performed in one of the country's most unique and biologically diverse environments to continue.

Sincerely,

  
FRANK R. LAUTENBERG  
United States Senator

  
FRANK PALLONE, JR.  
Member of Congress

  
ROBERT MENENDEZ  
United States Senator