

**Testimony of Richard W. Spinrad, PhD**

**Nominee for Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and  
Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,  
U.S. Department of Commerce**

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**Before the United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation**

Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, Members of the Committee, I am Rick Spinrad, a Professor at Oregon State University. I am honored to be nominated by President Biden for the position of Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). I am especially grateful to Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo for her support of my nomination. I also want to thank members of the Committee for taking time to meet with me and share their perspectives.

My passion for the ocean began early. As a 13 year-old in the New York City public school system I was fortunate to have one teacher who ignited in me an unbridled curiosity about the sea. My subsequent studies afforded me the opportunity to spend hundreds of days at sea, and to perform research sponsored by numerous federal agencies. But I felt compelled to put this work in a broader context through leadership positions in industry, academia, government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This breadth of experience has given me a unique understanding of how science is developed and applied. It also gave me a deep appreciation for the sanctity of science and the importance of scientific integrity.

My government experience has afforded me valuable insight into leadership and management, as well as the efficient operationalization of research. At the U.S. Navy and in NOAA, I translated scientific concepts into new products, such as a warning system for harmful algal blooms, and the framework for a global tsunami warning system. I have a deep understanding of the role public agencies play in the development and use of environmental information.

As the former President of a small company, I understand the requirements and operational tempo of business. Commerce Secretary Raimondo recently expressed her eagerness to engage in public-private partnerships at the Department. To that end I, too, believe strongly that continually improving the dynamic of the public/private enterprise is an essential element of economic development.

My own non-governmental organization experience gives me a deep appreciation for the important role NGOs play in the policymaking process. I have led several professional societies, and consulted for 501(c)3 organizations, where I helped bridge the communities of research and advocacy.

Academia is another critical partner for NOAA—and a sector I know well, having served on the faculties, and in senior administration, of three different public universities.

I believe this diversity of background has positioned me well to deal with the breadth of stakeholders and issues reflected in the NOAA mission.

If confirmed, I would come into the position of Administrator with a broad and deep knowledge of the inner workings of the agency, and I believe I am well equipped to handle the challenges and support the Administration's vision for the future. I'd like to share my thoughts on how NOAA can continue to play a vital role in the future of our nation.

- **We must build on NOAA's long history of success, and meet the needs of the future by expanding, diversifying and enhancing products and services for all Americans.** If confirmed, I would take a fully integrated perspective to ensure the agency is imparting the best-in-class earth system intelligence, providing, for example, climate services and products in fisheries, weather, and oceans – in an equitable and just manner – for its many stakeholders.
- **We must strengthen and galvanize the relationship of NOAA with the private sector, academia, other federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, and philanthropy.** The Federal Government must help resolve the roles and responsibilities of all players in the field of addressing climate change, with a clear definition of who does what, how they do it, and when and why specific products are developed in what order.
- **We must ensure that NOAA builds economic opportunities while upholding the critical role of environmental stewardship.** This function will apply to efforts associated with adapting to and mitigating climate change as well as bolstering the established and new blue economies.
- **We must position NOAA to take an aggressive and active role in diversifying the federal workforce, and the general STEM community, in a just, equitable, and inclusive manner.** As one of the original authors of NOAA's policy on scientific integrity, if confirmed, I also am fully committed to ensuring that NOAA scientists can do their work, publish their results, and engage broadly.
- **We must capitalize on NOAA's technical strengths to bolster the United States' position as a leader in global environmental issues.** The United States must be recognized, unquestionably, as a strong leader, not only in developing the relevant technologies and scientific programs, but also as a problem-solver and capacity-enhancer.

I am humbled to appear before you and, if confirmed, I am energized by the prospect of working with the extraordinary individuals at NOAA. I now welcome your questions.