

**Chairman Richard Shelby Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and
Related Agencies**

**Hearing titled "National Water Hazards & Vulnerabilities: Improved Forecasting
for Response & Mitigation"**

April 4, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

Good afternoon and welcome to the first Commerce, Justice, Science Subcommittee hearing of 2017.

I want to begin by recognizing the Subcommittee's new Ranking Member, Senator Shaheen of New Hampshire, who I believe will be a good partner in accomplishing the Subcommittee's work moving forward.

I also want to thank our panel of witnesses for agreeing to be here today to testify about the important issue of water-related hazards.

Severe flooding, extended droughts, and dangerous storm surges, among others, threaten communities across our nation.

In 2015 and 2016, property damage caused by flooding alone resulted in 105 deaths and an estimated \$20.6 billion in losses.

Over the same time-period, losses due to drought amounted to \$8.1 billion.

Improving our ability to predict and forecast these events will help save lives and protect property by allowing emergency managers to better prepare and respond to extreme weather incidents.

Collecting water-related data and distributing it in a useable form is an invaluable task—one that takes a collective effort by the federal government, states, and the private sector.

Cutting-edge research is needed to advance our current prediction and modeling capabilities.

One example of a recent advancement spurred by university research is the unveiling of the National Water Model, which is a predictive tool that simulates water flow across the continental United States.

The National Water Model is the product of collaboration between federal agencies and universities to solve a complex problem: tracking water flow across the country to aid local communities and emergency managers in responding to water-related threats.

Our nation's water forecasting capability is headquartered at the National Water Center, located in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. This unique Center serves the entire nation by bringing together federal agency officials, university researchers, and other interested parties to research, track, and forecast water-related events across the country.

This hearing will examine the current activities being conducted by the federal government, states, universities, and the private sector in the area of water hazard forecasting and mitigation.

I hope the panel will not only inform this Subcommittee about the good work being done, but also speak to the areas in need of improvement, the gaps that need to be filled, and any unnecessary overlap between public and private sector activities that could be streamlined.

Before recognizing the Ranking Member for her remarks, I would like to briefly introduce the panel.

Dr. Louis Uccellini is director of the National Weather Service at the Department of Commerce, and can speak about specific activities of the federal government in water prediction.

Dr. Antonio Busalacchi is President of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, a consortium of universities focused on better understanding naturally occurring water-related events.

Mary Glackin, Senior Vice President of the Weather Company for Private-Public Partnerships, will speak to the important work being done by the private sector in partnership with government agencies.

Finally, Bryan Koon is the director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management, but comes with an extensive background in national emergency management experience—including serving during the Clinton and Bush administrations in the President's Emergency Operations Center. Bryan also has experience in the private sector serving as director of Emergency Management for Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., and is former President of the National Emergency Managers Association.

Welcome to all of you.

Now I would like to recognize the Ranking Member, Senator Shaheen, for her opening remarks.

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