



SpacePolicyOnline.com

A product of Space and Technology Policy Group, LLC

**Fact Sheet**  
**Updated May 24, 2017**

## **NOAA'S FY2018 BUDGET REQUEST FOR SATELLITES**

President Trump released his FY2018 budget request on May 23, 2017. NOAA's satellite acquisition budget would decrease significantly, but some of that reduction is due to development programs ramping down. One program still in development would be cut, however, Polar Follow On (PFO), and plans for new space weather satellites would not materialize.

The total FY2018 request for satellite system acquisition in NOAA's Procurement, Acquisition and Construction (PAC) account is \$1,579,479, compared to \$1,978,761 appropriated for FY2017.

### **Introduction**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) manages the nation's civilian weather satellite and other operational environmental satellite programs.

NOAA is part of the Department of Commerce and has a broad set of missions that include marine fisheries management, ocean and atmospheric research, and operation of the National Weather Service as well as its satellite programs.

NOAA's satellite programs are part of NOAA's National Environmental Satellite, Data and Information Service (NESDIS). The NESDIS budget is separated into two accounts: Operations, Research and Facilities (ORF) and Procurement, Acquisition and Construction (PAC). The PAC account contains funding for acquisition of new satellite systems *and is the only portion of the NESDIS budget tracked in this fact sheet*. NOAA's FY2018 budget request is available in its ["Blue Book,"](#) posted on the NOAA website.

Congress appropriates funding to NOAA as part of the Commerce-Justice-Science (CJS) appropriations bill.

### **NOAA's Satellite Programs**

Responsibilities for government weather, land imaging, and earth science satellites are split among several agencies. NOAA manages the nation's civilian weather satellites and,

historically, other operational environmental satellite programs. NASA builds and launches earth science satellites for research and technology development purposes. The U.S. Geological Survey operates the government's Landsat land remote sensing satellites. The Department of Defense (DOD) has its own weather satellite program as well as classified satellites for intelligence gathering. This fact sheet covers only NOAA's satellite programs and only procurement, acquisition and construction, not operations (which are in the ORF account).

## **Weather Satellites**

NOAA operates two complementary weather satellite systems, one in polar orbit and one in geostationary orbit.

### **Polar Orbit**

Satellites in polar orbit circle Earth's poles, allowing them to view the entire planet. NOAA's current polar orbit satellites are called POES – Polar Orbiting Environmental Satellites. Once in orbit, they are given a designation of "NOAA" followed by a number. NOAA-19, the last of the series, was launched in 2009.

NOAA is now developing a new system called Joint Polar Satellite System (JPSS). JPSS is NOAA's replacement for its portion of the NOAA-DOD-NASA National Polar-orbiting Operational Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS) program that was cancelled in 2010 after years of schedule delays and cost overruns. When JPSS began, NOAA was criticized for its high cost -- \$12.9 billion for four satellites (a total that included about \$4 billion in sunk costs in NPOESS). NOAA reduced the cost from \$12.9 billion to \$11.3 billion by narrowing the definition of what is included in that estimate. As currently formulated, the JPSS program covers the costs of building and operating only the first two JPSS satellites, JPSS-1 and JPSS-2, plus the money NOAA spent on NPOESS. The next two satellites are in a separate budget line item, Polar Follow On, which is described below.

The first two satellites, JPSS-1 and JPSS-2, are expected to be launched in 2017 and 2021. They will be given numbers once they are in orbit. JPSS-1 will become NOAA-20.

NOAA also is part of an international/interagency team building a constellation of small satellites, COSMIC-2, to enhance the accuracy of forecasts using data from the polar orbiting satellites, as discussed below.

Because of the many years between the launch of NOAA-19 and planned launch of JPSS-1, NOAA is using a satellite developed by NASA, Suomi-NPP (S-NPP), as an operational weather satellite even though it was not designed for operational use. S-NPP was launched in 2011. NOAA officials and other policy makers have expressed concern in the past that NOAA-19 and S-NPP might cease functioning before JPSS-1 is launched and a "gap" in weather satellite coverage might occur. The head of NESDIS, Steve Volz, downplayed the chances of a gap at a [February 12, 2015 congressional hearing](#), but a Government Accountability Office (GAO) witness at the hearing was skeptical of those claims. One of GAO's concerns is that the JPSS-1 launch date may slip because of late delivery of instruments, especially the Advanced

---

Technology Microwave Sounder (ATMS). Indeed, it has slipped, most recently from March 2017 to September 2017.

- **JPSS.** The Trump FY2018 budget request for JPSS is \$775.8 million, a small planned reduction from its FY2017 appropriated level of \$787.2 million as funding requirements for development ramp down.

One programmatic change that is in NASA's budget, rather than NOAA's, is the Trump Administration's proposal to terminate the Radiation Budget Instrument (RBI) that is planned to be flown on JPSS-2. The Administration says RBI is being terminated because of cost growth and technical challenges. RBI would continue measurements of Earth's reflected sunlight and emitted radiation that are made by CERES (Clouds and Earth's Radiant Energy Systems) instruments on several existing satellites. A CERES instrument will be included on JPSS-1. The RBI issue is tracked in SpacePolicyOnline.com's fact sheet on NASA's FY2018 budget request.

- **Polar Follow On (PFO) and EON-MW.** The next two JPSS satellites are being procured under the PFO program. As of 2016, JPSS-3 was expected to be ready for launch in FY2026 and JPSS-4 in FY2031. See prior year versions of our NOAA budget fact sheets for a discussion of the controversy over the PFO program in FY2016 and FY2017.

PFO is the satellite program that would be most affected by the Trump budget. Congress appropriated \$328.9 million for FY2017 and NOAA's FY2017 budget documentation shows that the agency planned to request \$586 million in FY2018. Instead, the request is \$180 million and future years are listed as "TBD."

NOAA states in its FY2018 budget book that it will "initiate a re-plan" for the PFO program and "work to improve its constellation strategy considering all the polar satellite assets to ensure polar weather satellite continuity while seeking cost efficiencies, managing and balancing systems technical risks and leveraging partnerships."

In prior years, NOAA included a request of \$10 million for an Earth Observing Nanosatellite-Microwave (EON-MW) as part of the PFO budget. The EON-MW concept was to build and launch a very small ("nano") satellite carrying a single microwave instrument that could provide vital measurements in case something went awry with JPSS-1. Congress was lukewarm about the idea. In FY2016 it denied the request. In FY2017 it said EON-MW could proceed as long as it did not interfere with PFO and would have to be paid for within available funds.

No mention is made of EON-MW in the FY2018 budget request.

- **COSMIC-2 GPS Radio Occultation.** The Constellation Observing System for Meteorology, Ionosphere and Climate (COSMIC)-2 program is a constellation of 12 very small ("micro") satellites built by NOAA in cooperation with Taiwan and the U.S. Air Force. It is a follow on to COSMIC (also known as Formosat-3), a set of six microsattellites launched in 2006.

The satellites use signals from the Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) system for radio occultation (dubbed GPS-RO or GNSS-RO<sup>1</sup>) to make measurements of temperature and water vapor throughout the lower parts of the atmosphere. When combined with measurements from polar-orbiting weather satellites, better weather forecasts are enabled.

NOAA's goal is to have at least two sets of six microsattellites in low Earth orbit, one in equatorial orbit and the other in polar orbit. NOAA also funds the ground system for reception and processing of the COSMIC data.

NOAA originally planned to fund the construction of the satellites, but private sector companies have emerged that want to provide RO data on a commercial basis using their own satellites. See prior year versions of this fact sheet information on the request and appropriations for COSMIC-2 and the debate over obtaining such data from commercial sources instead. NOAA has [stated](#) that as many as 50,000-100,000 RO measurements per day would be useful and COSMIC provides only 2,000-3,000, so there is ample opportunity for other providers of such data.

The Trump FY2018 budget request also supports acquisition of RO data from commercial sources. It requests \$6.1 million for COSMIC ground systems, but none for satellites.

## **Geostationary Orbit**

The other weather satellite system is in geostationary orbit 35,800 kilometers above the equator where satellites maintain a fixed position relative to a point on Earth. Such weather satellites are especially useful for monitoring tropical regions where hurricanes form. NOAA keeps one Geostationary Operational Environmental Satellite (GOES) over the eastern region of the United States and adjacent waters and another over the western region. Whatever satellites are in those positions are designated "GOES-East" and "GOES-West." NOAA typically also keeps a spare satellite in between those two positions that can be moved quickly to replace a malfunctioning satellite if necessary (as happened in [2012](#) and [2013](#)). The GOES-13 satellite is now GOES-East and GOES-15 is GOES-West, with GOES-14 as the spare.

NOAA is procuring four new [significantly enhanced](#) GOES satellites – a block buy called the GOES-R series. Initially given letter designations (GOES-R, -S, -T and -U), they will change to numbers once they are in orbit. GOES-R itself was successfully launched in November 2016 and is now GOES-16. However, the series is still colloquially referred to as "GOES-R."

The FY2018 budget request for GOES-R is \$519 million, a steep drop from the \$753 million appropriated for FY2017, but that is a planned reduction as development ramps down.

---

<sup>1</sup> GPS is the U.S. satellite system for positioning, navigation and timing (PNT) data. Russia, China and Europe have their own systems (GLONASS, Beidou and Galileo). Collectively they are referred to as Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS). The COSMIC-2 satellites can use any of the signals.

## Other Operational Environmental Satellites

NOAA also is responsible for other satellite projects in partnership with NASA, the Air Force or other countries to obtain data to forecast “space weather” (DSCOVR), obtain ocean altimetry data (Jason-3), provide search and rescue capabilities via satellite (SARSAT), and collect data from ocean buoys around the globe (A-DCS).

### Space Weather

- **Deep Space Climate Observatory (DSCOVR).** DSCOVR was successfully launched on February 11, 2015. In NOAA’s FY2018 budget request, DSCOVR is moved into the Operations, Research and Facilities (ORF) account since it is operational now. This fact sheet does not cover NOAA’s ORF account, in part because funding figures are not broken out sufficiently in ORF to identify funding for specific programs like this. For completeness, however, a description of DSCOVR will continue to be part of this fact sheet this year.

DSCOVR has four instruments that monitor the Sun and the Earth from the Sun-Earth L1 Lagrange point between the two bodies, about 1.5 million kilometers (1 million miles) from Earth. Two instruments face towards the Sun and monitor particles ejected by the Sun that impact Earth’s atmosphere and can result in satellite failures or power outages on Earth – “space weather.” The other two were provided by NASA and face towards Earth: the Earth Poly-Chromatic Imaging Camera (EPIC) that provides a constant daylight view of Earth that anyone can [view in real time](#); and the National Institute of Standards and Technology Advanced Radiometer (NISTAR) that measures radiation emitted by Earth.

DSCOVR originated in the Clinton Administration where it was championed by Vice President Al Gore. His goal was to have a satellite that provided a constant view of Earth to help remind everyone of the fragility of the planet and its climate. He named the spacecraft Triana, but it was harshly criticized by Republicans in Congress and dubbed “Goresat.” After a review by the National Academy of Sciences, science instruments were added to make it more scientifically valuable, but President George W. Bush suspended the program when he took office. The satellite remained in storage throughout most of the Bush term, but was resurrected and launched during the Obama Administration.

The Trump Administration supports NOAA’s operation of DSCOVR’s two Sun-facing instruments, but calls for termination of the two Earth-facing instruments (EPIC and NISTAR) whose operations are funded in NASA’s budget. That issue is tracked in SpacePolicyOnline.com’s fact sheet on NASA’s FY2018 budget.

The text of NOAA’s FY2018 ORF budget documentation states that NOAA is requesting an increase of \$2.4 million for DSCOVR, but it is not clear if that is above the FY2017

appropriated level (\$3.745 million) or the amount NOAA projected last year that would be needed for FY2018 (\$3.86 million).

- **Space Weather Follow-On.** NOAA requested small amounts of money in FY2016 and FY2017 (see prior year versions of this fact sheet) to begin analyzing alternatives for the next space weather satellite to replace DSCOVR. In its FY2017 request, NOAA outlined a plan to acquire two new satellites, two sets of sensors, and two launches, with the goal of launching the first of the two in FY2022 before the end of DSCOVR's design lifetime.

NOAA requested \$2.5 million for FY2017 and Congress doubled it to \$5 million. The projected request for FY2018 was \$53.7 million, ramping up to \$186.1 million in FY2019, \$154.5 million in FY2020, and then down to \$81.5 million in FY2021.

The Trump FY2018 budget request does not support that plan. The request for Space Weather Follow-on is only \$500,000.

The FY2018 request includes \$4.9 million for System Architecture and Advanced Planning (SAAP) to complete the NOAA Satellite Observing System Acquisition (NSOSA) study and associated grant work. NSOSA began in FY2016 to allow NOAA to develop a future satellite architecture for weather, space weather and environmental remote sensing requirements beyond 2028. Apparently a decision on a space weather follow-on will await the results of that study.

Congressional interest in space weather is growing. On May 2, 2017, the Senate passed the Space Weather Research and Forecasting Act (S. 141) to focus attention on the issue, although its focuses on agency roles and responsibilities, not funding.

## Other Programs

- **Jason-3.** Jason-3 was successfully [launched](#) in January 2016. Like DSCOVR, in NOAA's FY2018 budget request Jason-3 is transferred to the Operations, Research and Facilities (ORF) account since it is operational now. This fact sheet does not cover programs funded in the ORF account, in part because the budget is not broken out in sufficient detail to track specific programs like this. For completeness, however, a description of Jason-3 will continue to be part of this fact sheet this year.

This is the third in a series of Jason satellites that provide ocean altimetry data following on the success of the Topex/Poseidon satellite. That satellite and the first two Jasons were experimental and funded by NASA and its French counterpart, CNES. Data collection transitioned into an operational mode and since NOAA historically was responsible for operational environmental satellites, Jason-3 was funded by NOAA and its European counterpart the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT). NASA and CNES remained involved as partners.

In the FY2016 budget request, however, the Obama Administration [proposed](#) that NASA assume responsibility for all non-military environmental satellites other than weather and space weather. Therefore, future ocean altimetry satellites are to be funded by NASA; the expectation is that they will continue to be international.

NOAA will still fund Jason-3 operations, however. As noted, this is now funded in NOAA's ORF account, which states that an increase of \$3.138 million is requested, but it is not clear if that is above the \$4.357 million appropriated in FY2017 or the \$7.651 million projected to be needed for FY2018 in last year's request.

- **Cooperative Data and Rescue Services (CDARS, formerly SIDAR).** In FY2015 and FY2016, NOAA requested funds for a Solar Irradiance, Data and Rescue (SIDAR) program to replace the Polar Free Flyer (PFF) in NOAA's FY2014 budget request, which was zeroed by Congress. The goal was to find a way to launch three instruments – Total Solar Irradiance Sensor (TSIS), Advanced Data Collection System (A-DCS), and Search and Rescue Satellite-Aided Tracking (SARSAT) – that were intended to be launched on the cancelled NPOESS satellites (explained earlier). The JPSS spacecraft that replaced NPOESS are too small to accommodate these three instruments and NOAA has been trying to find an alternative way to get them into orbit. SIDAR was not popular in Congress, and the TSIS sensor was transferred to NASA.

By FY2016, what remained in this line item was funding for A-DCS and SARSAT. For FY2017, the account's name was changed to CDARS (the NOAA budget book does not describe this request in the text, but it is listed in the tables), although the House Appropriations Committee refers to it as SIDAR. The FY2017 request was \$500,000 and Congress appropriated that amount.

The Trump FY2018 budget request is \$500,000.

## **Commercial Weather Data Pilot**

Congress directed NOAA to initiate a commercial weather data pilot program in the FY2016 appropriations act to determine if weather data from commercial companies can be utilized in NOAA's weather models. Language in the accompanying explanatory report directed NOAA to seek to enter into at least one pilot contract, through a competitive process, to assess the potential viability of commercial weather data in its weather modeling and forecasting. NOAA officials expressed concern about whether commercial data will be accurate, reliable, timely, and can be validated. The pilot program is intended to answer those questions.

NOAA was required to submit an implementation plan for the pilot program. It provided the report to Congress in March 2016 and [made it public](#) in April. The pilot program will focus on radio occultation (RO) data, discussed earlier. See prior year versions of this fact sheet for funding in FY2016 and FY2017.

As noted earlier, the FY2018 Trump budget supports acquisition of data from commercial sources although it requests only \$3 million, a reduction from the \$5 million appropriated for FY2017.

### **Other NESDIS Satellite-Related Activities**

The PAC account in NESDIS also funds satellite ground services; systems architecture and advanced planning; and projects, planning and analysis.

“Satellite CDA” is sometimes listed as part of the NEDSIC PAC account. It is a construction project and therefore not covered in this fact sheet.



**NOAA's FY2018 Budget Request for Satellite System Acquisition  
(in \$ thousands)**

| Program   | FY2015 enacted   | FY2016 enacted              | FY2017 enacted <sup>4</sup> | FY2018                |       |        |       |
|---|------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------|--------|-------|
|   |                  |                             |                             | Request               | House | Senate | Final |
| GOES-R  | 980,838          | 871,791                     | 752,784                     | 518,532               |       |        |       |
| Jason-3   | 23,175           | 7,458                       | 4,357                       | note <sup>5</sup> 0.0 |       |        |       |
| JPSS  | 916,267          | 808,966                     | 787,246                     | 775,777               |       |        |       |
| Polar Follow On (PFO) (EON-MW <sup>Note 3</sup> ) | N/A              | 380,000<br>(370,000)<br>(0) | 328,900                     | 179,956               |       |        |       |
| Coop Data/Rescue Services (CDARS)                 | 7,300            | 500                         | 500                         | 500                   |       |        |       |
| DSCOVER   | 21,100           | 3,200                       | 3,745                       | note <sup>5</sup> 0.0 |       |        |       |
| Space Wx FO                                       | N/A              | 1,200                       | 5,000                       | 500                   |       |        |       |
| COSMIC-2 (ground system) (new sats/data)          | 6,800            | 10,100<br>(10,100)<br>(0)   | 8,100<br>(8,100)<br>(0)     | 6,100                 |       |        |       |
| Satellite Grnd Services                           | 50,000           | 54,000                      | 54,000                      | 53,000                |       |        |       |
| Sys Architecture & Adv Planning                   | 3,000            | 3,929                       | 3,929                       | 4,929                 |       |        |       |
| Projects, Planning & Analysis                     | 25,200           | 25,200                      | 25,200                      | 37,185                |       |        |       |
| Commercial Weather Data Pilot                     | --               | 3,000                       | 5,000                       | 3,000                 |       |        |       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                      | <b>2,033,680</b> | <b>2,159,344</b>            | <b>1,978,761</b>            | <b>1,579,479</b>      |       |        |       |

Source: FY2015 and FY2016 enacted and FY2017 request data from Department of Commerce budget documents.

Note 1: Text and numbers in parentheses are subsets. NA = not applicable.

Note 2: This fact sheet does not track spending for the other NESDIS budget account, Operations, Research and Facilities (ORF), so the totals shown here may not conform to other sources. The ORF budget funds satellite OPERATIONS rather than acquisition and is not tracked in this fact sheet. The Senate

Appropriations Committee report usually includes another line – “satellite CDA facility” – that is not tracked in this fact sheet because it is a construction project, not a satellite system. The House Appropriations Committee report separates the satellite CDA facility from the other spending.

Note 3: The Earth Observing Nanosatellite-Microwave (EON-MW) project is variously listed in NOAA budget documents as part of PFO or separately.

Note 4: For action on the FY2017 request, see the FY2017 version of this fact sheet.

Note 5: In the FY2018 budget request, Jason-3 and DSCOVR are funded in the Operations, Research and Facilities (ORF) account instead of PAC. This fact sheet covers only satellite programs in the PAC account. See text for more information.