

January 10, 2012

Dr. Jane Lubchenco, Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Room 5128
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Administrator Lubchenco:

The tsunami created by last year's devastating earthquake in Japan generated a massive amount of debris that now appears headed directly toward the coasts of Oregon, Washington and California. The amount of debris currently adrift in the Pacific Ocean could be in the millions of tons and may begin showing up on our coastline sometime in 2013 and beyond.

Earlier this week, I received a briefing from representatives of your agency as well as Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, Oregon State University, local emergency management officials and others. I came away from that meeting concerned about the possible negative effects the debris may have on the coastal communities and economies, and I want to underscore the importance of having a response plan that prepares for the worst while hoping for the best.

Because the potential for damage that this debris could do to Oregon's fishing, crabbing, shipping and tourism industries is a major concern, it is vital that federal, state and local agencies and outside organizations work together to get ahead of this issue. This kind of broad-scale cooperation and coordination at every level is crucial to minimizing overlap and ensuring that accurate information is available to everyone who could come in contact with this debris, be it on the water or on the beaches.

It is my hope that all the agencies with jurisdiction in this issue can build upon their current interagency efforts in preparing for the tsunami debris. It would also be useful in delivering a unified message that will give the public a "one-stop shopping" resource to go to for information or to provide additional data.

It is reassuring to know that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has assumed a lead role in working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other partners to coordinate data collection, as well as a response plan to address the wide range of potential scenarios and threats generated by the debris field. As you move forward, I hope that NOAA will prioritize the development of a response plan for West Coast

States and help communities and agencies along the coast plan and prepare for any eventualities related to the arrival of this debris. This might, for example, include establishing toll free numbers and websites to assist the public.

I hope you will join me and my staff in keeping the public informed as to what is going on and what to expect. I look forward to working with you and other stakeholders as we make preparations. Please let me know how I can be of assistance in your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ron Wyden". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

RON WYDEN
United States Senator