



Admiral Gallaudet tells Congress forecaster workforce should be reduced and their jobs automated because WFOs are inefficient. Cites three non-existent studies.

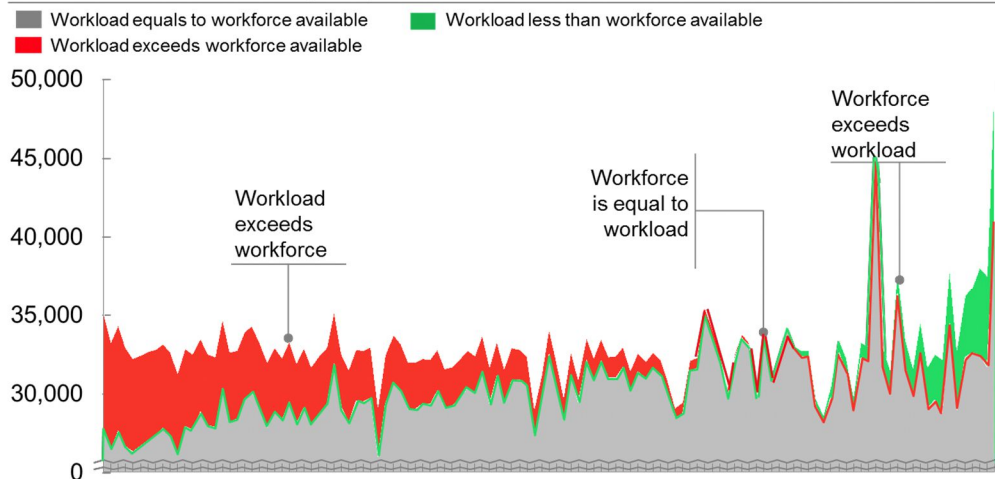
(April 12, 2018) - In testimony on April 11 before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, the Acting NOAA Administrator defended the Administration’s proposal to eliminate 20% of all the forecasters at the WFOs. Rep. José Serrano (D-NY), the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, asked Admiral Gallaudet whether the Administration’s proposal to cut funding for 248 meteorologists would “create a very real risk of reduced timelines and accuracy in weather forecasting?” Gallaudet praised the work of NWS employees but said:

“We don’t believe that that reduction in the number of positions will introduce significant risk. In fact, there has been three studies on the workforce at the Weather Service and all have concluded that the Weather Service can operate more efficiently. There are just a number of either operating practices – like reducing the number of forecasters on watch or even the hours that any given weather forecast office operates – as well as using automation and improved processing technologies like the one I mentioned in my opening statement – the AWIPS. So technology and better business practices at the Weather Service I think will allow for us to absorb the reduction of people in this budget.”

NWSEO is aware of no outside study which has concluded that the WFOs are operating inefficiently. On the contrary, one study, conducted by McKinsey and Company, found that most WFOs are understaffed for the workload they are expected to perform:

WFO Workforce available compared against expected workload based on workload drivers, 2014

Hours of series 1340 meteorologists by WFO



Workload/Workforce across each WFO

1 Regression analysis returned statistically significant results with p-value of 0.00 and overall lower r-squared of .244; variables that were not statistically significant in this regression but were significant in the full regression were population, pop. density, land area of responsibility, advisories, and the Western and pacific region dummy variables; variables that became statistically significant were the number of fire, tropical and marine events; and the eastern and Alaskan region dummy variables
2 Workforce defined as all FTE and overtime hours worked by series 1340 FTEs, which would include and supervisory positions in series 1304

SOURCE: NWS Overtime data by biweekly pay period, 2002-'15; NWS CFO's FTE data by year, 2008-'14; NWS WWA data, 2008-'14, 2008-'14 NWS Severe weather event data, Storms events database, Ntl. Climate Data Ctr.

In May 2017, the Government Accountability Office released a study that revealed that the vacancy rate in NWS operational units has reached a point where NWS employees are “unable at times to perform key tasks.”

Service assessments conducted following ten major storms that occurred since 2008 (including last year’s Hurricane Matthew and “Superstorm Sandy”) found that the ability of the NWS to protect lives during these major events was compromised due to inadequate staffing at Forecast Offices or River Forecast Centers.¹

-NWSEO-

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National Weather Service employees.**

**No one works harder for National Weather Service employees than
National Weather Service employees.**

We are NWSEO.

¹ Central U.S. Flooding of June 2008; Southeast U.S. Floods, September 18-23, 2009; Record Floods of Greater Nashville: Including Flooding in Middle Tennessee and Western Kentucky, May 1-4, 2010; Historic Tornadoes of April 2011; Missouri/Souris River Floods of May-August 2011; Middle and Lower Mississippi River Valley Floods of Spring 2011; Remnant of Tropical Storm Lee and the Susquehanna River Basin Flooding of September 6-10, 2011; Hurricane/Post Tropical Storm Sandy, October 22-29, 2012; Historic South Carolina Floods of October 1-5, 2015; Historic Nor’easter of January 2016; October 2016 Hurricane Matthew. These reports can be found at: <http://www.weather.gov/publications/assessments>