Last week, Americans voted to keep the status quo in Washington by re-electing President Obama, keeping Republicans in the majority in the House, and keeping Democrats in the majority in the Senate. As a result, we'll be hearing about and working with many of the same players in D.C., but this does not mean that the next four years will necessarily look the same as the last four. Science funding and policy in Washington will continue to move in new directions, and the next few years will present new challenges for the atmospheric sciences community.

In particular, we are experiencing the most austere funding environment seen in Washington for many years. Spending cuts have already impacted programs and research at our universities and laboratories. One of the biggest impending challenges is the so-called ‘fiscal cliff’ approaching on January 2, 2013, which threatens to impose an additional 8.2% in across-the-board cuts to non-defense discretionary funding. As Congressional leaders and the President begin negotiations to avert the fiscal cliff, we are closely following how the science community will likely be impacted. We are working with university leaders, private sector leaders, and associations in our community to convey to Congress and the science agencies just how valuable atmospheric sciences research is to the economic resilience of our nation and to the safety and well-being of Americans and how devastating these cuts would be to the continuity and integrity of our research.

UCAR President Tom Bodgan and Senior Advisor Scott Rayder are also working to elevate the standing of the atmospheric sciences community in Washington, D.C. In particular, UCAR and the Weather Coalition are leading an effort to establish the nation’s first U.S. commission on weather policy, to bring together the growing weather community - public, private, and academic sectors alike - to examine the direction the community is headed and where it needs to go. A commission would make recommendations and set priorities for the entire weather enterprise, taking a vantage point that is larger than any one agency or institution. The idea for such a commission emerged from the recommendations in the recent National Academies report Weather Services for the Nation: Becoming Second to None, and it was proposed first by a panel of experts, which included UCAR President Tom Bodgan, at a public briefing held on Sept. 27 in the House Science Committee hearing room on Capitol Hill in D.C.

A U.S. weather commission must be a community-based effort, for and by the weather and atmospheric sciences community. We are depending on you to guide us and drive us in the proper direction. To this end, we invite you and your colleagues to learn more about and contribute to the the idea to establish a U.S. weather commission at http://www.weathercoalition.org/. In particular, we strongly encourage you to join an online community discussion forum on the website we have dedicated expressly for this purpose. No matter your views or ideas on a commission, we would like you to voice your thoughts and be heard. The forum is open to everyone, and there is an option to comment anonymously if you so choose.

The Oldaker Group, our talented new team based in Washington, D.C., has also compiled a number of additional federal relations updates for this Washington Update:

1. NOAA Science Advisory Board Receives Initial Review of NOAA R&D Portfolio
2. Major Reorganization at NSF – Impacts Cyber-infrastructure and Geosciences
3. Update on Major NSF Personnel Decisions
4. NSF Revamping Policy of Recompetition for Large Scale Facilities
5. House Republicans Reject Easing of Earmark Ban
6. Committee Chairmanships to be decided in the House right after Thanksgiving
7. A Look at Where Committee Leadership Stands Now...
1. NOAA Science Advisory Board Receives Initial Review of NOAA R&D Portfolio

On November 14, the R&D Portfolio Review Task Force of the NOAA Science Advisory Board presented its preliminary recommendations to the full SAB. The task force is chaired by Dr. Roberta Balstad and Dr. Peter Kareiva. This review of the NOAA portfolio was requested by NOAA senior management. Below are the key findings and recommendations made by this task force. A copy of the task force report can be seen [here](#).

The task force said that NOAA R&D is world class and critical to the nation’s security, economic growth, and environmental health; its importance will expand as the nation continues to be exposed to coastal flooding and extreme weather. NOAA requires an R&D portfolio that is more sharply focused on key areas essential to improving its services to the nation and meeting the requirements of its Next Generation Strategic Plan. Given fiscal realities, NOAA can meet its mandate only if it significantly changes the management of its R&D portfolio and is given flexibility to allocate its R&D budget to its highest priorities.

In this report, the task force focused on broad research directions and management needs rather than on prescribing specific research topics. Their key recommendations include:

- Develop a strong research capability internally and externally in the socioeconomic and integrated ecosystem sciences, and ensure the nation’s needs are met by NOAA’s observation and data sharing systems;

- Maintain a strong core of internal scientists whose skill sets fit with the agency’s strategic priorities is essential;

- Increase the agency’s scientific breadth and flexibility by leveraging the contributions of partners in the academic, public and private sectors;

- Replace the current Chief Scientist position with a Deputy Under Secretary of Commerce for R&D who has responsibility for research across the agency and has the necessary budget authority to direct all NOAA research;

- Implement these changes by eliminating or consolidating duplicative R&D and research unrelated to NOAA’s strategic priorities and by working more closely with the Administration and Congress to find ways to manage its R&D funds more flexibly and efficiently; and

- The Task Force recommends that NOAA implement the management and organization recommendations by September 30, 2015.

With respect to socioeconomic science, although NOAA has made scientific advances in many areas, its work could be significantly improved by increasing its capacity in the socioeconomic sciences. NOAA needs to increase its investment in this research to meet the goals of its strategic plan. Examples of needed R&D include research on communication of weather and climate events; decision making under uncertainty; behavioral and economic impacts of extreme weather, demographic and economic trends in coastal communities. Two previous SAB reports have recommended that NOAA increase its investment in the socioeconomic sciences, yet these fields still account for a miniscule 0.6 percent of NOAA’s overall budget (2008).

Concerning ecosystem sciences, the task force said that the National Ocean Policy recommended that NOAA implement an ecosystem approach to management and coastal and marine spatial planning. NOAA currently lacks both the staffing and organization to meet this high priority research need, and also also misses opportunities for leveraging ongoing ecosystem science research in EPA and USGS.
There is a tendency to refine single stock assessments and management, while failing to switch attention to ecosystem management, which may ultimately yield greater benefits.

On strengthening research to operations and operations to research, the task force concluded that NOAA focuses on science, service and stewardship to meet its mission; unless the science is transitioned to operations, NOAA will fail in its mission. NOAA must make certain that the end uses of the scientific information are understood from the start by its researchers and that end-user needs are explicitly incorporated into problem formulation. Ways to enhance this process include forging new partnerships of researchers and end users and making the transition process a specific metric in performance evaluations.

On the subject of maintaining critical observation strategies, the task force said that although NOAA’s observing systems, including ships, satellites, sensors, data networks and cutting-edge informatics are integral to the nation’s science enterprise and NOAA’s work on Earth observations, there is room for improvement in both effectiveness and cost-efficiency. The lack of an integrated coastal observing system is a concern. The Task Force did not have the resources to examine NOAA’s current observing systems and how they should evolve, and the task force recommends that the SAB form a special task force to review existing observing capabilities, examine options for more cost-effective observations and data sharing strategies and discuss the evolving needs and sustainable approaches for new observations and technologies.

Finally, on the subject of new research leadership, the Task Force finds that the leadership of NOAA R&D is fragmented and warrants a stronger, more centralized approach. The Task Force recommends that the Chief Scientist position be replaced by a Deputy Undersecretary of Commerce for R&D who has both line and budget responsibility for the functions organized under OAR, R&D in other line offices, and the Research Council. Extant R&D efforts should be consolidated and some labs should be eliminated to cut costs so resources can be freed up for more effectively transitioning research to operations and for initiating new research activities. New, consolidated R&D units should be held accountable for the relationship of R&D to service, operations and stewardship activities within NOAA.

NOAA should take steps to eliminate or redirect research that does not meet its highest strategic priorities. To do this, NOAA should increase its reliance on extramural research because it is more flexible than permanent in-house R&D staff. At the same time, NOAA should hire individuals with needed new research skills and expertise.

The task force said that it does not recommend that NOAA cut extramural research investments to reduce expenses because that would interfere with its ability to meet its mission and to leverage the work of its internal core science staff. The NOAA research portfolio is currently too heavily weighted toward internal R&D; NOAA should increase its support of extramural research to better leverage its R&D investment with the resources of the nation’s leading universities. Such leveraging could result in faster scientific advances at lower costs, particularly in new areas of research, and would provide NOAA with greater flexibility than would hiring new permanent staff to conduct research. External scientists should be treated like the valuable partners they are. When NOAA cut extramural programs in the past, this caused uncertainty in the scientific community about NOAA’s commitment to research and led to poor relations with other agencies and the university research community.

2. Major Reorganization at NSF – Impacts Cyberinfrastructure and Geosciences

The National Science Foundation (NSF) recently announced a substantial reorganization affecting a number of the staff offices reporting to the NSF Director. These could also have a potential fiscal impact on Oldaker clients that have major facilities like telescopes, ships, computer systems, and large multi-disciplinary centers currently funded in the Computer and Info Sciences (CISE) and the Geosciences (GEO) Directorates. First, NSF has created a new division in CISE for the Office of Cyberinfrastructure (OCI), expanding CISE’s current budget from $734 million to $928 million with the addition of OCI. Second, the Office of Polar Programs, which contains the US Antarctic Program (USAP), with its $450
million budget and significant physical infrastructure challenges as a new division in GEO. These new and extensive infrastructure requirements were highlighted recently by the Augustine Report that calls for major investments in the Antarctic over the next decade. While this will expand the GEO budget to $1.4 billion the addition of the Office of Polar Programs – and particularly the USAP – could add a real infrastructure and logistics funding burden to an already overburdened Geosciences research program. Other components of the reorganization have less budgetary impacts than these two. We will be watching how the FY2014 budget unfolds in these areas.

3. Update on Major NSF Personnel Decisions
Leadership in the various directorates at NSF is also--and always--in a mild state of flux. While a number of directorates remain occupied (these include SBE with Myron Gutmann; BIO with John Wingfield; EHR with Joan Ferrini Mundy; and CISE with Farnam Jahanian), others are changing. MPS's new Assistant Director, F. Fleming Crim from University of Wisconsin-Madison, will arrive in January 2013. Celeste Rohfing is Acting AD until his arrival. Tom Peterson, currently AD/FNG, is departing next month and no replacement has been announced. Finally, on November 8th, NSF announced that Dr. Roger Wakimoto, currently the Director of the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), will become the new Assistant Director for Geosciences at NSF. Dr. Wakimoto will start at NSF in February 2013.

4. NSF Revamping Policy of Recompetition for Large Scale Facilities
Another upcoming development of significance is the soon-to-be-released 'Guidelines for Competition and Renewal of Large Facility Operations and Maintenance Agreements,' aka, the Director's Recompetition Implementation Plan. The National Science Board (NSB), on February 7, 2008, passed a resolution re-affirming its re-competition policy (NSB-08-12) which impacts eighteen (18) large, multi-disciplinary facilities supported by NSF. The resolution states that "it is NSF's policy to promote full and open competition for operations of its large facilities. Non-competitive renewal of the operating award requires compelling justification to ensure that the best interests of the scientific community are served."

This implementation plan, which is still circulating within NSF for final review, will provide a plan to implement re-competitions among these facilities. It will contain many of the principles that have been discussed by the NSB, as well as several internal and external committees established by NSF to examine this issue. The goals will be to make any re-competition take place on the most level playing field possible. To that end, the plan will likely contain management and administrative approaches within new or existing Cooperative Agreements (CA) that make competition fair; will allow varying intervals for recompeting facilities; and while allowing non-competitive renewals or extensions, those will undoubtedly require a compelling case be made by the NSF staff and Director. It is also likely that the NSB would have to concur with the Director in such actions. Finally, internal and external reviews of major facilities--such as user surveys, scientific output of the facility, the facility's efficiency and business operations, and an impressive vision of the facility's leadership would be taken into account as part of such a re-competition.

As this Director's Recompetition Implementation Plan will be presented to the NSB in early December, the proposed plan should be available shortly. We will be alert for its issuance and the outcomes of the NSB discussion next month, and keeping you informed.
5. House Republicans Reject Easing of Earmark Ban

Yesterday, November 15, Rep Don Young of Alaska planned to offer, but then withdrew before a vote, an amendment to Rules of the House Republican Conference that would have allowed certain earmarks in the next Congress that convenes in January 2013. The change to the Rules would have continued the ban on earmarks, “except if the recipient of the earmark is the federal government, a state or a unit of local government; the member sponsoring such earmark is identified; the earmark is initiated in committee; and the earmark falls within the applicable section 302(a) allocation.”

The current Rules of the House Republican Conference includes a ban: “Earmark Moratorium: It is the policy of the House Republican Conference that no Member shall request a congressional earmark, limited tax benefit, or limited tariff benefit, as such terms have been described in the Rules of the House.”

The official Rules of the House of Representatives do not ban earmarks, but rather include a definition for earmarks: Clause 9 of Rule XXI: For the purpose of this clause, the term “congressional earmark” means a provision or report language included primarily at the request of a Member, Delegate, Resident Commissioner, or Senator providing, authorizing or recommending a specific amount of discretionary budget authority, credit authority, or other spending authority for a contract, loan, loan guarantee, grant, loan authority, or other expenditure with or to an entity, or targeted to a specific State, locality or Congressional district, other than through a statutory or administrative formula driven or competitive award process.”

The Senate has not included earmarks in the recent three appropriations cycle. However, it is important to note that the decision to eliminate earmarks is not in the Senate’s rules, instead it is a practice established by the Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Whether this practice will be dropped, extended, or changed in some way in the new Congress remains to be seen.

6. Committee Chairmanships to be Decided in the House Right After Thanksgiving

In another important development, this week House Republicans filled all positions on the Steering and Policy Committee. This committee is the entity that votes and determines the chairman and Republican membership on all committees. The Steering and Policy Committee is expected to meet the week after Thanksgiving to vote on all committee chairmanships as well as decide on Republican membership on all the committees. Democrats will follow their own schedule for determining ranking members and membership on committees as well, though their process might not be complete until after the New Year.

7. A Look at Where Committee Leadership Stands Now...

With the election out of the way, the jockeying and maneuvering has begun over leadership positions within the House and Senate Committees. While it may be premature to carve these chairpersonships into stone, here is a look at some of the likely candidates for the Committees that may be relevant to science, technology, and the budget. A more comprehensive listing of Committee membership in the House and Senate and a current understanding of likely movement is attached as a PDF.

House Committees:

Appropriations: Current Chairman, Rep. Harold Rogers (R-KY) is expected to remain. Ranking Member is currently TBD.

Armed Services: Current Chairman, Rep. Buck McKeon (R-TX) is expected to remain. Current Ranking Member, Rep. Adam Smith will remain as well.

Budget: Rep. Paul Ryan (R-WI) would need a waiver from leadership as his Chairmanship is term limited. He would very likely receive one, however, should Rep. Ryan not to seek it, Rep. Scott Garrett (R-NJ) is next in line in terms of seniority. Outside possibilities are Rep. Tom Price (R-GA), and Rep.
Jim Jordan (R-OH) both of whom have expressed some interest in the position. Current Ranking Member, Chris Van Hollen (MD), will also remain.

**Education and the Workforce:** Current Chairman, Rep. John Kline, (R-MN) is expected to remain. Current Ranking Member, Rep. George Miller (CA), will remain.

**Energy and Commerce:** Current Chairman, Rep. Fred Upton, (R-MI) is expected to remain. Current Ranking Member, Rep. Henry Waxman (CA), will remain.

**Homeland Security:** Current Chairman, Rep. Steve King (R-IA) is term-limited. Rep. Candice Miller (R-MI), could leapfrog more senior members, Rep. Mike Rogers (R-AL) and Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX) for the gavel. Current Ranking Member, Rep. Bennie Thompson (MS), will remain.

**Natural Resources:** Rep. Doc Hastings (R-WA), currently holds the Chairmanship; however, he has expressed an interest in the Rules Committee Chairmanship. His potential successor for Natural Resources would likely be Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UT). Ranking Member, Rep. Ed Markey (MA), is expected to remain.

**Oversight and Government Reform:** Current Chairman, Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) is expected to remain. Ranking Member, Rep. Elijah Cummings (MD), is expected to remain.

**Rules:** Current Chairman, Rep. David Dreier (R-CA) is retiring and Pete Sessions (R-TX) is likely to be his successor. However, Rep. Doc Hastings (R-WA) has also expressed an interest in the Chairmanship. Ranking Member, Rep. Louise Slaughter (NY), is expected to remain.

**Science and Technology:** Current Chairman, Rep. Ralph Hall (R-TX), is term limited and Rep. James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) and Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX) have expressed interest in succeeding him. Ranking Member, Rep. Bernice Johnson (TX), is expected to remain.

**Transportation and Infrastructure:** Current Chairman, Rep. John Mica (R-FL) is term-limited and Rep. Bill Shuster (R-PA), is seen as his likely successor. Ranking Member, Rep. Nick Rahall (WV), is expected to remain.

**Ways and Means:** Current Chairman, Rep. Dave Camp (R-MI) is expected to remain. Ranking Member, Rep. Sander Levin (MI), is expected to remain.

**Senate Committees:**

**Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry:** Current chairwoman, Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) is expected to remain. Ranking Member, Sen. Pat Roberts (KS), wants to remain, however, Sen. Thad Cochran (MS) may challenge him for the Ranking Member position.

**Appropriations:** Current Chairman, Sen. Daniel Inouye (HI) is expected to remain. Ranking Member, Thad Cochran (MS), would need a term-limit waiver to remain. Sen. Shelby (AL), is expected to oppose that waiver and seek the Ranking Member position.

**Armed Services:** Current Chairman, Sen. Carl Levin (MI) is expected to remain. Ranking Member, Sen. John McCain (AZ), is likely to remain.

**Budget:** Current Chairman, Sen. Kent Conrad (ND), is retiring and Sen. Patty Murray (WA) is his likely successor. However if Sen. Murray declines and Sen. Wyden (OR) takes Energy, Sen. Bill Nelson (FL) will rise to Chairman. Ranking Member, Jeff Sessions (AL), is likely to remain.

**Commerce, Science, and Transportation:** Current Chairman, Sen. Jay Rockefeller (WV) is expected to remain. Sen. Jim DeMint (SC) is expected to become the Ranking Member.
Energy and Natural Resources:  Current Chairman, Sen. Jeff Bingaman (NM) is retiring and Sen. Ron Wyden (OR) is his likely successor. However, if Sen. Wyden chose the Chairmanship on Budget, Sen. Landrieu (LA) would likely become Chairwoman of the Energy Committee. Ranking Member, Lisa Murkowski (AK), will likely remain.

Environment and Public Works:  Current Chairwoman, Sen. Barbara Boxer (CA) is expected to remain. Ranking Member, Sen. James M. Inhofe (OK), is likely to remain.

Finance:  Current Chairman, Sen. Max Baucus (MT) is expected to remain. Ranking Member, Sen. Orrin G. Hatch (UT), will remain.

Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions:  Current Chairman, Sen. Tom Harkin (IA) is expected to remain. Ranking Member, Sen. Michael B. Enzi (WY), will likely remain.

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs:  Current Chairman, Sen. Joe Lieberman, (CT) is retiring and with Sen. Carl Levin (MI) staying at the helm of Armed Services, Thomas Carper (DE), is his likely successor. Ranking Member, Sen. Susan M. Collins (ME), is term limited. Sen. Tom Coburn (OK) is expected to rise to the Ranking Member position.

Rules:  Current Chairman, Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-NY) is expected to remain. Ranking Member, Sen. Lamar Alexander (TN), is expected to remain.