



# **“Nothing about us without us:” NOAA’s new youth engagement efforts**

Dr. Lauren Gibson  
Special Advisor on Youth Engagement  
Office of the Under Secretary

# Roadmap

- Why youth engagement
- New agency efforts
  - Bringing youth into decision-making
  - Fostering a culture of youth engagement
  - Improving our youth programming
  - Creating stronger career pathways
    - Young Changemakers Fellowship
- Discussion





# Youth want to be—and need to be—heard

In a [study](#)<sup>1</sup> of 10,000 young people (16-25yrs)...

- **60%** were “very worried” or “extremely worried” about climate change
- **45%** felt that their feelings on climate change affected their daily lives
- **81%** said that had talked to others about climate change, and of those people, **nearly 50%** said they were ignored or dismissed

<sup>1</sup>Hickman et al., 2021



# Youth engagement as a solution

Collective action + authentic decision-making power = positive impacts on young people

- Collaborative environmental action → reduced climate anxiety<sup>1</sup> and boosts in hope<sup>2</sup>
- Voice, trust, and power from adults → increased sense of empowerment and connection to community<sup>3</sup>
- Opportunities to explore career options<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Schwartz et al., 2022* – <sup>2</sup>*Nairn, 2019* – <sup>3</sup>*Zeldin et al., 2018* – <sup>4</sup>*Denault et al., 2019*





# Positive impact on organizations

Organizations that involve young people in decision-making see:

- Improved outcomes in their work<sup>1</sup>
- Increases in innovative approaches<sup>1</sup>
- Changes in staff<sup>2</sup>
  - Deepening commitment to the org
  - Improved outlooks on the abilities of young people
  - Increased willingness to bringing youth voice into their work

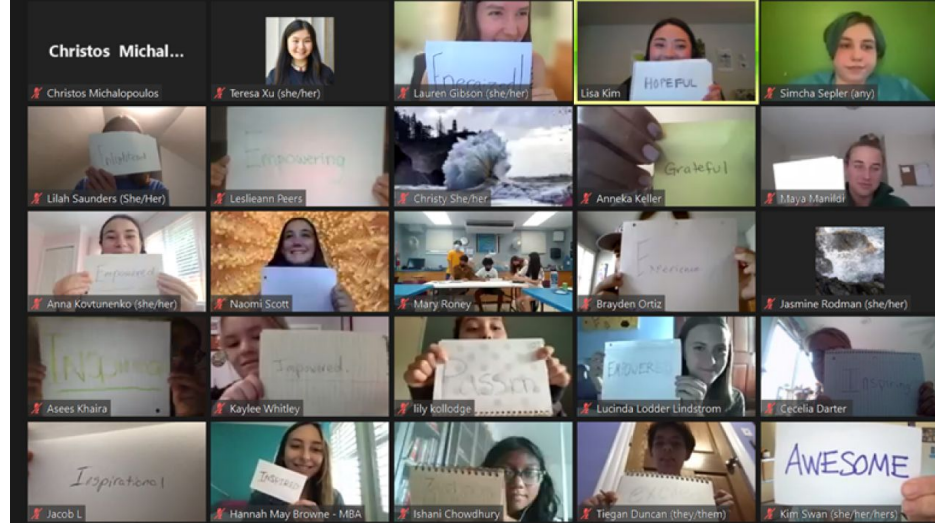
<sup>1</sup>Zeldin, 2004 – <sup>2</sup>Kennedy, 2018

# Youth engagement as an opportunity for NOAA

- Agency benefits
  - Advance our mission
    - Bringing in important and diverse voices
    - Taking action for oceans and environment
  - Start NOAA career pathway before college / career
  - Stand out as a leader in youth voice
- Youth benefits
  - Access NOAA expertise on important env. issues
  - Opportunity to be genuinely heard

# Overarching youth engagement goals:

1. Bringing youth into decision-making
2. Fostering a culture of youth engagement
3. Improving our youth programming
4. Creating stronger career pathways



# 1. Bringing youth into decision-making

- New program to bring high school perspectives directly to leadership
- Youth listening sessions during travel
- Possible youth working groups on existing advisory bodies





## 2. Fostering a culture of youth engagement

- Having an agency youth engagement lead
- Engaging with local youth during travel
- Exploring an agency priority (NAO)
- Inviting NOAA staff to serve as mentors (YCF)



# 3. Improving our youth programming

- Identifying / addressing youth program needs
- Linking internal programs to share ideas
- Creating shared definitions re: youth programs
- Connecting externally on best practices



FEMA



## 4. Creating stronger career pathways

- Increasing opportunities for high schoolers
- Connecting alumni of NOAA youth programs
- Boosting the hiring of program alumni



## 4. Creating stronger career pathways

- Increasing opportunities for high schoolers
  - Young Changemakers Fellowship
- Connecting alumni of NOAA youth programs
- Boosting the hiring of program alumni



We are excited to work with NAAEE to launch the  
**Young Changemakers Fellowship!**

Nine high schoolers will join the 2023 pilot year.





# Young Changemaker Fellows will...



Bring youth perspectives  
to NOAA priorities



# Young Changemaker Fellows will...



Bring youth perspectives to NOAA priorities



Build skills on ocean & environmental action

# Young Changemaker Fellows will...



Bring youth perspectives  
to NOAA priorities



Build skills on ocean &  
environmental action



Design and lead their own  
action project





# Young Changemaker Fellows will...



Bring youth perspectives to NOAA priorities



Build skills on ocean & environmental action



Design and lead their own action project



Co-design this new program with us



# Young Changemaker Fellows will...

be paid!



Bring youth perspectives to NOAA priorities



Build skills on ocean & environmental action



Design and lead their own action project



Co-design this new program with us



# To do this, fellows will engage in...

- An in-person workshop in DC
- Monthly webinars
  - Building skills around environmental action
  - Exploring career opportunities (esp. at NOAA!)
- Quarterly listening sessions with leadership
- Development and implementation of their own action project
- One-on-one mentorship with NOAA employee

# Discussion questions

- Are there any efforts from this presentation that are of particular interest to you as an SAB?
- In what areas could you see youth perspectives contributing to SAB efforts?
- Would exploring a youth working group within the SAB be of interest?



Youth Perspectives on  
Climate Change

