

# WATERLOG

EXPERTS IN COASTAL RESILIENCY

November 4th, 2019

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## OMB - The No-Show

The White House Office of Management and Budget, the primary culprit in our long-fought search for coastal resilience funds, is a no-show. Let me tell you from recent experience, chances are if you've had a meeting before with OMB, you aren't excited for the next one. While our water resources infrastructure (including soft features) crumbles and washes away, two non-elected officials are secretly fighting against Congress to support their own agendas. In the process, they have subverted the wishes of Congress for funding projects. For example, OMB doesn't like beach nourishment projects. We get that. But Congress does see them as an important first defense in fighting coastal erosion. Congress says that any Corps project that produces more than \$1 in benefits for dollar of cost is eligible to receive funding. OMB says the BCR must be 2.5 to 1. Even then, OMB picks and chooses among which projects it wants to fund with a BCR of 2.5 to 1 or greater. It's totally non-transparent. These arbitrary decisions made by OMB must be stopped.

Senator Tom Carper of Delaware recently reiterated that the Senate Environment and Public Works committee has repeatedly heard that OMB micromanages the Corps with a lack of transparency in how it reviews projects. This is an area Congress can step in – reforming the benefit-cost analysis process. The result of this lack of transparency and an arbitrary 2.5:1 BCR is that smaller, coastal and lower income communities are severely disadvantaged.

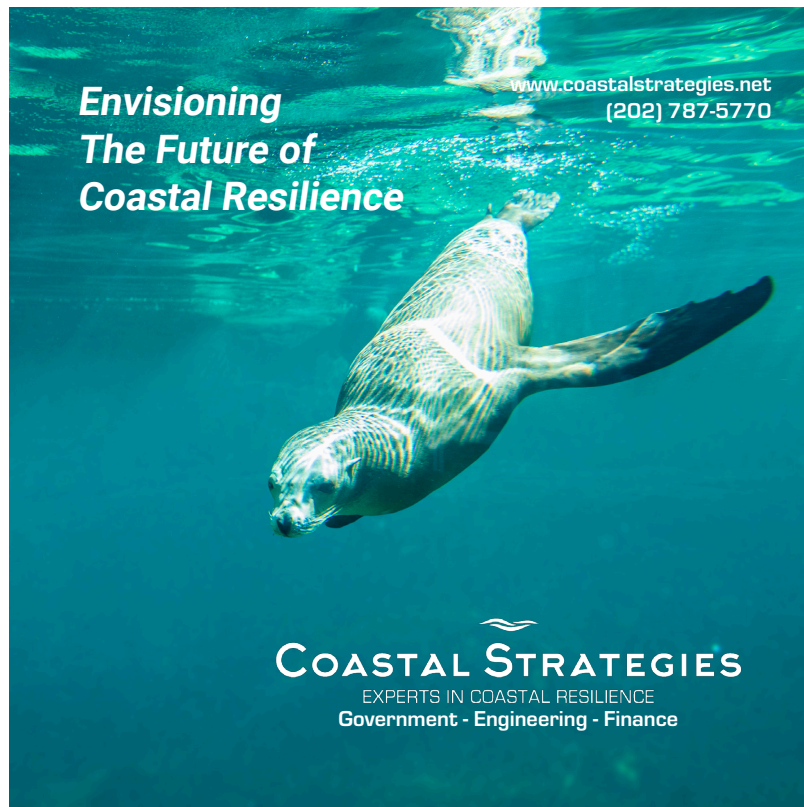
OMB can't even be subpoenaed to testify before Congress. That is why no representative appeared at the EPW hearing on October 23rd. That means no accountability. Do you want someone with no accountability taking control of the nation's critical infrastructure? These two individuals running the show have never worked elsewhere but the federal government.

In other words, they don't understand local governments, so they don't understand your challenges, and they don't understand your projects. Unless your project serves the national interest at 2.5x the federal investment, good luck with OMB. [Fortunately, there are some exceptions to be made for public safety and national security.]

In addition to hindering the budgeting process, OMB also is responsible for documents, reports and projects that remain significantly delayed. When it comes to playing in the sandbox, we all need to play nicely. OMB must be an effective and cooperative partner for the federal government to have a resilience program that works.

## **ASBPA Annual Conference – A Recap**

It was a great time in Myrtle Beach, and it was nice catching up with many of you on our list. Coastal Strategies was a proud sponsor of the event and spoke on Friday about financing alternatives to coastal resilience. The conference program and other events came off very well. However, it needs more of one thing: lots more local governments. To prevent the conference from becoming a business to business conference, ASBPA needs to get local governments to attend and voice their challenges, concerns and hopes for the future. Local governments are the heart of everything we do, ASBPA does, and all things coastal. This isn't an ad, we really suggest that if you are a local government, find your two municipal neighbors and book for Long Beach, CA in 2020. We'll see you there!



## Corps Funding Bill – “Not This Package, but the Next”

The chairman of the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee, Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.), said his panel’s bill would appear with military funding legislation in the second package of spending bills the chamber is aiming to move in coming weeks.

“I wish it were coming up with this first package. It’s not, but it will be in the next one,” Alexander said. Once the first package gets passed, we can start to get excited for E&W to take the floor. We’ll send out a note when E&W comes to the floor.

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### *Subscriber Suggestions*

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## House Unlocks HMTF

The house passed HR 2240 296-109 which unlocks funds currently held in the HMTF. Funds derived from harbor revenue that are held in the Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund have been used in the past to offset the federal deficit, rather than for their intended purpose. That alone has caused significant pushback from lawmakers in recent discussions on how to fund water resources infrastructure. It currently holds a balance of \$9.3 billion in unspent revenue.

Rep. Garret Graves (R-La.) argued, “if I ran a nonprofit and collected funds from the public to provide health care to someone who needed it, and I took the money and spent it somewhere else, there’s a word for that in the private sector, and it’s called embezzlement and people go to jail for it.”

## Profits, Plastic, and Plastic Profits

Lawmakers are hesitant to reduce plastic use because of bottom lines. This has nothing to do with straws and everything to do with every other bit of plastic that we use in our daily lives. Have you ever asked for a cup of water at a coffee shop, and instead getting a paper cup like all the other refreshments are served in, you are offered a plastic cup of water? It's cheaper.

Plastic is light and durable – it ships cheaply and functions properly when we want it to. It is now everywhere we don't want it. It's in our water (bottled water too – don't fool yourself), our oceans, our rivers and streams, even fish have levels of microplastics in their flesh. In today's world, plastic attached to every component of daily life, from brushing our teeth and using toothpaste, to the phones in our hands, our cars, shoes, clothes, take out boxes, the list goes on. When we're done with it, it stays as-is for centuries, unlike other natural materials that degrade within one century.

Corporations know plastic produces profits and the purpose of a Corporation has become entirely profit-centric. If investors want to pursue ESG (environmental and social governance) in their portfolios, start with knocking off plastic producers, high-volume buyers and sellers and invest in plastic alternatives. Encourage others to reduce their use of plastic and refuse plastic when it isn't needed. I don't need a plastic bag to carry my sandwich in. It's just fine in my hand.

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