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Some Florida Beaches May Get Narrower

The Corps is studying Miami-Dade and Pinellas-Treasure Island projects, among others, to see if they can justify recommending federal fiscal participation be continued beyond their original plan of 50 years. But the costs of sand dredging and placement have gone up far faster than the projects benefits. Under the Corps' internal rules, what it counts as a project benefit on the coast and inland is extremely limited. Flooded roads, disabled power lines, losses of jobs and business income are just a few examples of what's not included. If the Corps is able to come up with a BCR greater than the 1 to 1 ratio required by law, here are two realities for these projects: Their beaches will be narrower and their BCR won't meet the minimum 2.5 to 1 that OMB requires to make them eligible for budgeting. We'll have much more to say about this process in the coming days.



Miami Beach, FL is struggling to make a favorable BCR - Photo City of Miami Beach

Corps Urged to Support GLCRS

U.S. Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand urged the Corps in a letter last week to include funds for the Great Lakes Coastal Resilience Study (GLCRS). This study is what is referred to by the Corps as a Section 729 study, which really means a comprehensive watershed management study. This type of study can make no recommendations for specific projects but provides sufficient detail to allow a state or local government or agency to make informed decisions about their next steps. Section 729 studies are funded 75:25 (federal:non-federal) and typically take several years. The GLCRS is expected to take four years and have a total cost of \$12 million. The non-federal cost-share is expected to be divided among the eight Great Lakes states.

The coast of the Great Lakes varies drastically, with typical sandy shorelines in some areas and towering bluffs in others. With significantly higher water levels, erosion rates have been exacerbated and are threatening coastal properties. The number of hard structures along the coast has disrupted the natural flow of sediment and effectively starves certain regions of sediment. The GLCRS is an opportunity to develop management strategies that will help mitigate the effects of higher lake levels and intensifying weather events.



Coastal Erosion along Lake Michigan - Photo Sean Krajacic

California Goes Solar →

California Goes Solar

In a law approved earlier in 2020, the California Energy Commission approved a building code requiring new single-family and multifamily buildings up to three stories high to install solar panels. While the homes are still connected to the grid, the new panels will help offset a growing demand for electricity. Property owners also have another option - investing in an offsite community solar project. Current usage per household is roughly 3-4 kilowatts, however with a growing demand for electricity and the influx of electric vehicles, usage is expected to grow to 12-15 kilowatts, which is currently not possible with today's photovoltaic converters. If California can continue to lead the nation for solar the way it has for other trends in the past, it will mean great things for our changing climate and will help keep the ocean where it is.

Democrats Propose 5-Year Infrastructure Plan

With a total figure of roughly \$760 billion, Democrats have crafted a plan to deliver infrastructure and clean energy in a very expensive 5-year plan. The plan, however, does not include how the infrastructure would be paid for. Regarding coastal water resources, here is what we're interested in:

Water Infrastructure (Flood protection, navigation, etc.) — \$10 Billion

o Addresses the impact of severe weather events by tackling the backlog of Army Corps' projects designed to protect communities at risk of flooding, to enhance community resiliency, and to enhance national, regional, and local economic growth.

Harbor Infrastructure — \$19.7 Billion

o Funds the essential dredging and upkeep of American harbors, ports and channels – keeping commerce flowing and ensuring U.S. economic competitiveness.

The effort looks good, and the Corps' nearly \$100 billion-dollar backlog could actually be reduced by these figures. But again, how will it be paid for? It's either you and me, through taxes, or through the private sector using bonds.

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