

# WATERLOG

EXPERTS IN COASTAL RESILIENCY

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## US Dredge Budget Expanded

The Energy & Water appropriations bill was signed into law by the President on December 20th, 2019. Most of our readers are interested in both dredging and beach nourishment or sediment management in general. You might be pleased to know that the US dredging budget received a significant plus up this year compared to previous years. One of the programs established in this year's budget is a regional dredge demonstration program (\$377,650,000) in the Central Gulf Coast Region that will explore "innovative ways of executing dredging in a logical, sequenced manner, unconstrained by more traditional project-specific, account-specific, or single-year practices and seek efficiencies and cost savings by evaluating the region as a system to determine when combining work across multiple deep draft commercial navigation projects, across years, or across Construction and Operation and Maintenance accounts is appropriate." While there is no mention of beach nourishment, the goal is to respond effectively to dredging requirements resulting from storm events (hurricanes). We are eager to see this program in action and hope that it is someday expanded in such a way to allow the US beach nourishment program to be executed in a logical, regional manner that goes beyond individual accounts and looks at multiple projects in a region instead of the project-by-project approach that is taken now.

**Beneficial Use Pilot Projects** →

## Beneficial Use Pilot Projects

The pilot program was established in 2014, but legislators remain concerned about implementation. This year's budget includes \$7,500,000 for 10 selected projects. That may not get any specific project very far, but it will take the program from an idea to a real concept. Within 90 days, the Corps is required to brief the Appropriations Committees on planned activities, cost estimates and potential timelines for each of the 10 projects. WRDA 2018 authorized another 10 projects to be selected, however, the bill report includes language that allows only the projects authorized in 2014 to be funded without further consultation with Congress.

## FEMA Releases Additional \$50 Million for 2019 Hazard Mitigation Grants

The FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Flood Mitigation Assistance grant program has received an additional \$50 million, bringing the total to \$210 million. The program helps build a culture of preparedness by providing advance assistance for flood mitigation and project development in flood-prone communities and reducing National Flood Insurance Program flood claims. \$140 million will go to technical assistance, flood mitigation planning and mitigation projects that reduce the risk of flooding to severe repetitive loss properties.

FEMA transferred \$1.33 billion in risk to private insurers on January 2nd to protect the NFIP from large losses in 2020, a sign that unpredictability is hitting the insurance sector harder than before and that NFIP administrators are worried about losses in 2020 based on disasters in 2018 and 2019. "It takes the whole community to prepare for disasters, and that includes participation from the private sector," said NFIP Deputy Associate Administrator David Maurstad. Proposals for the FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance Flood Mitigation Assistance grant program are due by 3pm January 31st.

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**Who's Got Your Vote? →**

## It's 2020: Who's Got Your Vote?

*By Howard Marlowe*

No, not the presidential election. I mean the one for your local or state elected officials. The saying that all politics is local highlights two critical points for each of us to remember. On the one hand, voters care most about issues that directly affect them. On the other, elected officials respond to what they hear from those whose votes and campaign contributions keep them in office. If you care about the increasing flooding that comes on so-called sunny days as well as from hurricanes, then who you elect to your town council or state legislature is actually more important than who you elect to represent you in Congress.

There isn't a city or small village in this country that can turn a blind eye to changes that are taking place in weather patterns. The news reports aren't good; in fact, they are so scary that most people think they can't do anything. While we can each recycle trash, reduce our use of plastic, and take other actions on our own, it will be those communities or groups of communities that take decisive actions to raise roads, enhance resilience to erosion, increase storm water pumping systems, as well as modifying zoning laws and building codes that have the best chance to literally weather the storm. Cities, towns and villages that have elected leaders and developed community support for taking decisive action have the best chance of thriving for many decades to come.

The no-action alternative is a costly one. Property values along the coast are not increasing as fast as they have in the past, reflecting the increasing concern buyers have that stronger and more frequent storms will make the coast a good place to visit but not to live. That, in turn, lowers property tax revenues that provide funding for local governments as well as their ability to borrow money at very low interest rates. In short, it's not just the first and second row of homes that will feel the financial sting, but the entire community. Most larger businesses talk the right talk about climate change, but they are in the same position as individual homeowners. They're not sure what to do, with the larger ones more able to move elsewhere than homeowners and small businesses. As communities look at the options for near-term and long-term, including nearby businesses and military installations in the discussions can produce significant benefits for everyone.

Don't look to Washington for climate change leadership. It's not just this Congress or this Administration. Aside from the partisan gridlock and the square-earthers, they really don't know what to do. Until they hear from communities like yours that they need the federal government's technical and/or financial help, climate adaptation is simply not going to get onto their priority list. You and your neighbors can change that by electing local and state leaders who will provide tangible support implementation of adaptation initiatives in your community.

**Happy New Year!**