



## Local Beach Commission Rejects Millions for Corps Beach Project: Says Future Federal Funding Too Unreliable

Howard Marlowe | [Howard@CoastalStrategies.Net](mailto:Howard@CoastalStrategies.Net)

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The Carteret County Beach Commission (NC) is soliciting public comments after deciding to reject \$44.5 million in Federal funds due to the concern that funding for future periodic nourishments would be too unreliable. If the decision is upheld by the county commission after public comment, *it will be the first time in history any local government has turned down money already allocated by the Army Corps of Engineers due to a lack of faith in the availability of Federal funding for future renourishments.*

The Carteret County Beach Commission has figured out that rather than playing DC Roulette, it has a plan that doesn't rely on the whims of non-elected officials in Washington. Instead, it will use local tourism revenues supplemented by state funds to keep its beaches renourished for the next few decades. That funding is more reliable than counting on regular funding from Congress and gives the County greater flexibility in the design and implementation of the project.

The Commission anticipated this dilemma years ago and initiated planning for a project funded with only state and local money in the event the Federal project fell through. Then they got a windfall caused by a post-disaster supplemental funding bill that dangled \$44.5 million in front of the local beach commission, which has decided it can say “No.”

Since 1995, the only new Federal beach nourishment projects that have been constructed have been in response to major storms and have been done at full Federal expense. This would have been one of the first new cost-shared projects to be built, with the county and state sharing 35 percent of the initial cost and half the cost of periodic renourishments. The Carteret County Beach Commission knew it could come up with its share, but it doesn't want to be like so many other East Coast communities that have relied on hurricanes to provide their Federal share of the cost.

We are heading into a wake-up call for many of those who need Federal beach nourishment funding. There simply won't be enough in the Federal budget to meet the needs of states like New Jersey and Florida that got their projects started as a result of post-storm emergency legislation that didn't require the usual 35 to 50 percent non-Federal cost-share. Now, those projects need to be renourished and that's more than Uncle Sam can afford. To put things in perspective, New Jersey beach renourishment projects alone could take up all the roughly \$80 million appropriated by Congress. With over 90 Federal beach nourishment projects competing for funds nationwide, it's no wonder that the Carteret County Beach Commission wants none of this unpredictable game.

There are unpublicized developments in other states that show the Carteret County case is not likely to be an isolated example. Beach projects in Florida, Georgia and South Carolina are under study to determine if they qualify for an additional 50 years of Federal funding. What is happening in Carteret County shows that there are other ways to implement coastal resilience and adaptation that do not rely so heavily on the Federal government. This approach by Carteret County is a sign of forward thinking by community leaders who understand the importance of having both good coastal protection and a reliable cost-share partner in future decades.