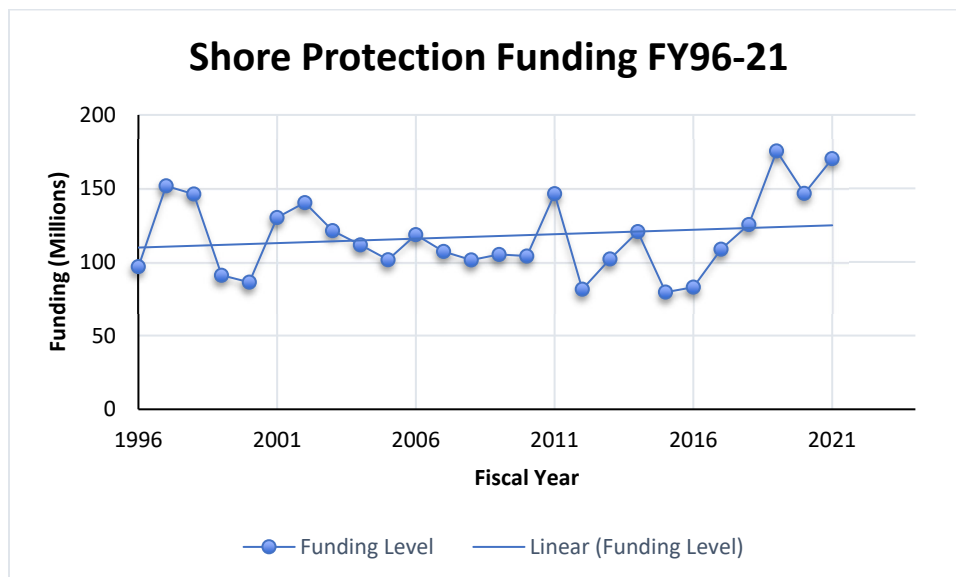


## What’s at Stake for Coastal Projects in the Pending Corps Funding Bill

September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Following the pattern of the past few years, the full House has approved the funding bill for the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), but the Senate version has only made it through committee. That’s Standard Operating Procedure because appropriations bills getting individual votes on the Senate floor are surefire targets for amendments and other stalling targets. Not to worry. There’s plenty of precedent for a conference between a House-passed bill and its Senate committee-approved counterpart. So, let’s look at some of the differences between the two measures.

First, they both provide historic levels of funding for the Corps’ coastal program, \$118.4 million for the House, just under \$166 million for the Senate. Funding for the current federal fiscal year ending on September 30th was a record \$151.5 million. Here’s a chart that shows the funding levels back to FY ’96.



*Corps Historical Shore Protection Funding 1996-2021; Source: Warwick Group Consultants, LLC*

Second, President Biden gets the award for proposing the smallest Corps coastal program in the 25 years we have been tracking what Congress refers to as “shore protection” funding. His \$19.4 million proposal comes in \$1 million below the previous holder of this dubious award: Trump with \$20.5 million in FY17. The numbers in the chart above show that Congress has been a strong supporter of the coast. Third, both the House and Senate bills contain congressional earmarks for the first time in over a decade. The President has always earmarked the Corps’ budget. Now Congress has added its own preferences and provided the money to fund them. A couple of things need to be noted here. Not all members of Congress submitted earmark requests. Some objected to bringing the practice back, but they are not left out, just somewhat disadvantaged. Congress has provided pots of money for new studies and construction projects with that money to be allocated by the Corps in a final FY’22 Work Plan. Be aware that the Additional Funding has to be approved by both the Corps and the Administration before it gets submitted to Congress. This won’t happen until 60 days after a

bill is finally passed and signed into law. When will that happen? Definitely not by Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>. We'll have more to say about that in subsequent posts.

Now, let's look at the slightly different emphases for the coastal program in the two bills.

- (1) Different projects received earmarks. For example, the following projects received funding in the **House**, but not the Senate committee bills –
  - San Clemente Shoreline (CA)
  - Surfside-Sunset-Newport Beach (CA)
  - Fort Pierce – St. Lucie County (FL)
  - Pinellas County (FL)
  - St. Augustine Back Bay (FL)
  - Indiana Shoreline (IN)
  - Louisiana Hurricane Protection (LA)
  - Wrightsville Beach (NC) (named in both bills but with different dollar numbers)
  - Norfolk (VA)
- (2) Some projects were named in the **Senate**, but not the House versions—
  - Delaware Bay Coastline (Oakwood Beach) DE
  - Great Egg Harbor Inlet & Peck Beach (NJ)

These differences get settled out when the staffs of the House and Senate appropriations committees meet and make recommendations for a final conference (aka compromise) bill. *Local and state sponsors of the projects listed above need to be in touch with their congressional delegation to see what they can do to make sure of inclusion in the final bill.*

Overall, the House put more money (\$7.4 million) into studies than the Senate (\$3.35 million). The House also has about \$30 million more for construction, which means placing sand on the beach. The President requested absolutely \$0 for construction and about \$3.2 million for Investigations.

Readers with sharp mathematical skills are wondering where the “missing” money went that was cited at the beginning of this article. There are many non-project-specific programs that we have tracked over the past 25 years that make up the difference. For example, both House and Senate bills provide a solid \$10 million for the beneficial use of sand (the President requested only \$1 million), from \$3.5 million to \$7.5 million for the Regional Sediment Management Research Program (the President requested only a trivial \$100,000), and a plus-up of the President's request for the Planning Assistance to States program from \$1 million to between \$10 million and \$11 million. For the Additional Funds category described above, both the House and Senate added strong figures ranging from \$8.3 million to \$9.5 million for Investigations and \$20 million for construction. Here's a [link](#) to this year's table showing details about what programs and projects we track. Those state and local sponsors of projects not named in the table but who believe they should be funded ought to start now with an advocacy plan to be included in the final Work Plan.



If you have questions or comments,  
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