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WHAT'S UP WITH FEMA?

FEMA just lost its second Acting Director. David Richardson was removed from that position a few days ago, having served as an interim director since May. While no cause was cited, -he resigned after a troubled six-month tenure marked by low visibility, internal conflicts, and criticism over disaster responses. In the meantime, FEMA's chief of staff, Karen Evans, will serve as the acting administrator. The agency has not had a permanent head under President Trump during his second term. The president had appointed a Review Council to determine if the agency ought to be abolished or go through major modifications. The Department of Homeland Security, of which FEMA is a part, claims that it is anticipating "the forthcoming release" of the Council's report. Published reports in Politico claim that the Trump administration is considering moving FEMA to Texas. But the reason for that move seems to be that the top candidate for a permanent FEMA Administrator seems to be Nim Kidd, head of the Texas Division of Emergency Management. But Kidd doesn't want to move to Washington, DC.

Moving FEMA creates challenges of its own since it has relationships and communication responsibilities with the Department of Homeland Security which is in DC. Although Kidd seems to be highly qualified, this is an agency whose future remains cloudy and whose present status has been marked by delays in payouts for both disaster aid and NFIP payouts.

Readers who have had any experience with FEMA (good or bad) are asked to send them to WaterLog (Howard@WaterLog.Net). Requests for anonymity will be respected.

2025 HURRICANE SEASON MORE DAMAGING THAN IT SEEMS

The Washington Post called this a "weird" hurricane season because it is the first time in a decade that no hurricane made landfall in the U.S. Nevertheless, Tropical Storm Barry contributed to the deadly flooding the Texas' Hill Country; Tropical Storm Chantal caused equally serious flooding in North Carolina, and Hurricane Melissa was part of a one-two punch that combined with a Nor'easter to cause serious erosion on New Jersey's coasts. Bottom line: severe storms remain a danger to flooding and erosion even when they don't make actual landfall. Storms are intensifying as ocean temperatures reach record warmth, making them more dangerous landfall or not.

DEFENSE DEPARTMENT TIGHTENS ITS MUZZLE

Pentagon officials have made a major change to the way that military officials will respond to inquiries from Members of Congress, according to reports from the Associated Press and other sources. Pentagon staff will now have to get permission from the Defense Department's Office of Legislative Affairs before they can have any communication with Members of Congress.

While the thrust of this new policy may be to assure that the Capitol Hill offices for each of the branches of the Armed Services clear their communications with congressional offices through the Defense Department, how it will affect communications between Congress and the Army Corps of Engineers remains to be seen.

There's at least one Corps project in every congressional district, causing most Capitol Hill offices to be in regular communication with either Corps Headquarters, Corps District offices, or the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. Answers to questions like "When's our next renourishment?" and "Has the dredging contract been awarded?" are probably not the type of communications that DoD was trying to control. The directives details are to be fleshed out by a department-appointed Working Group. The latest directive comes on the heels of the Pentagon limiting access to its daily briefings only to reporters who signed an agreement restricting what they could report.

WHAT'S THE STATUS OF THE CORPS' FY26 FUNDING?

When Congress reached agreement on a plan to reopen the federal government, the Corps funding for FY26 like most other agencies was extended at FY25 levels until January 30, 2026. The Energy & Water Development Appropriations Bill does not appear to have a chance to move to the Senate floor until mid-December at the earliest, with arguments over levels of funding for energy programs stuck in an intra-party squabble among Republicans. The possibility of another government shutdown remains if agreements on some or all appropriations bills can't be reached by the end of January. Since there was no coastal project funding in FY25, the Corps' coastal program is shut down except for those renourishments that were funded prior to FY25 and have yet to be implemented.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

We're tracking 177 bills that could have impacts on coastal communities. With the House of Representatives out and the Senate's agenda limited during the government shutdown, there has been little activity to report. Two new bills are awaiting Senate floor action: S. 861, the Disaster Assistance Simplification Act sponsored by Sen. Gary Peters (D-MI), and S. 1378, the Extreme Weather and Wildfires Act sponsored by Sen. Brian Schatz (D-HI). H.R. 4626, the Digital Coast Reauthorization Act, sponsored by Rep. Dave Min (D-CA) awaits action by the full House. You can see the listing of all coastal bills and their status [here](#).

Thanks for reading WaterLog!

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