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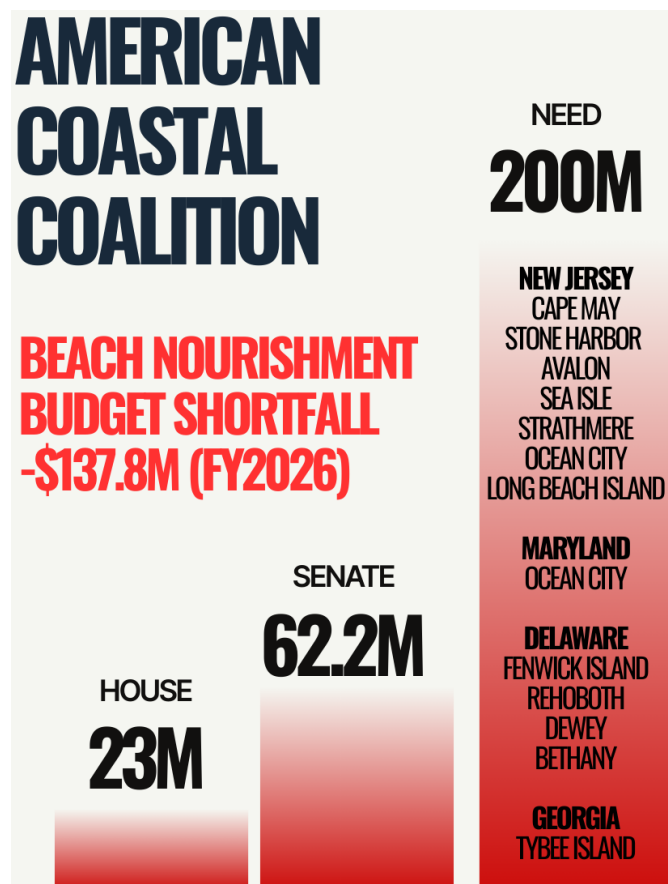
BAD NEWS FOR AMERICA'S BEACHES

The Corps is at least \$138M short of the \$200 million it needs to carry out the national beach nourishment program in FY26. The House included \$23M and the Senate included \$62.2M in FY26 Energy and Water appropriations. Congress could repurpose some flood control funds from inland projects, but there is not much Congress can do to add more funding for beaches at this time. The appropriations committees claim the low figure is the result of insufficient congressional interest.

There are over a dozen communities that are relying on \$63 million funding in the FY26 Work Plan. With the minimum cost for a beach nourishment project hovering from \$8m-10m just for mobilization (before pumping any sand), the Corps will have the tough job of picking winners and losers. The graphic below from the [American Coastal Coalition](#) depicts the current funding situation.

CONGRESS LAGS ON FUNDING PROGRESS

Congress has made little progress on passing the nine appropriations bills that have to be passed by the end of January. With Congress taking off for the end of year recess after this week, it will have less than 20 days to act on the measures of face another government



shutdown on February 1st. The Senate has been stalled as it works to pass a five-bill “minibus” package. Even if that passes both Houses next month, that still leaves the bill funding the Corps and three others that are not part of that package awaiting action. In all likelihood, the Senate Appropriations Committee’s released version of the Energy & Water Development Appropriations Bill (S. 3239) that funds the Corps is likely to be conferenced with the House-passed version (H.R. 4553) in January if the House and Senate Appropriations Committee leaders can agree on total funding levels for the Corps, Bureau of Reclamation and the Energy Department.

FEMA FUTURE REMAINS IN DOUBT

A task force created by President Trump to recommend its plans for the future of FEMA called off its planned reveal of its recommendations last week. According to CNN, the panel’s final draft report was going to recommend both a new name for the agency as well as cutting its work force in half accompanied by block grants to enable states to take on a more important role in getting funds to communities hit by disasters. The draft was said to include these key words: “It is time to close the chapter on FEMA. A new agency should be established that retains the core missions of FEMA, while highlighting the renewed emphasis on locally executed, state or tribally managed, and federally supported emergency management.

Meanwhile, a bipartisan measure that will strengthen FEMA and make it an independent agency, the Fixing Emergency Management for Americans (FEMA) Act (H.R. 4669) has been approved by the House Transportation Committee on a 57-3 vote. It awaits full consideration by the House sometime next year. Finally, FEMA has a new Interim Director with the appointment of Karen Evans late last month. Evans is formerly a top emergency response official at the Energy Department.

PERMITTING CHANGES PROPOSED

Legislation to change NEPA and the Clean Water Act has been moving through the House of Representatives over the past several days. The PERMIT Act (H.R. 3898), Promoting Efficient Review for Modern Infrastructure Today, has passed the House. Its backers describe it a “commonsense reforms to the Clean Water Act” that will overhaul the act’s permitting processes with claims that it will reduce regulatory burdens. Opposition came from House Democrats who said it was a handout to industry that would shift burdens from polluters to disadvantaged communities. The bill establishes timelines for when environmental groups can file lawsuits challenging a permit and would codify Corps of Engineers issuance of nationwide permits for oil and gas pipelines. The PERMIT Act also redefines “navigable water” to exclude waste treatment systems and streams that flow only in direct response to precipitation. The Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED)

Act (H.R. 4776) overhauls the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It has met strong opposition from a group of House conservative Republicans who fear it will take down current regulatory barriers to offshore wind. Whether they succeed or not should be known before the House leaves for its holiday recess at the end of this week.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

WaterLog is tracking 186 bills of possible interest to coastal communities. The House has approved S. 216, the “Save Our Seas Amendments Act 2.0” (sponsored by Senators Sullivan, R-AK and Whitehouse (D-RI). The bill reauthorizes NOAA’s marine debris program....H.R. 1491 is awaiting action by the Senate, having already passed. Sponsored by Rep. Greg Murphy (R-NC), the bill applies disaster-caused deadline postponements to the limitation in the Internal Revenue Code on credits or refunds, ensuring that extended filing periods are recognized....Rep. Tim Moore (R-NC) has just introduced H.R. 6693 to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to establish expedited permitting procedures for post-disaster recovery activities incorporating interagency coordination and best management practices to ensure timely rebuilding while protecting endangered species....H.R. 3898, the PERMIT Act, discussed above, is now on the House floor. The full list of bills can be found [here](#).

Thanks for reading WaterLog!

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