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Bad News for America's Beaches (cont'd)

Congress has passed a final version of the legislation funding the Corps of Engineers. While it boosts the agency's funding by \$2 billion, it cuts funding for projects providing sand on the beach to just over \$58 million, of which all but \$16 million is earmarked for specific projects. The Senate Appropriations Committee included language directing the Corps to brief the Committee within three months on the unfunded coastal flood risk projects. That requirement is continued in the final bill passed by Congress.

As we reported in [last month's WaterLog](#), the [American Coastal Coalition](#) has been calling for \$200 million to nourish the nation's beaches, putting Congress \$142 million short of that goal at a time when the Corps is one of the few federal agencies whose budget received a significant increase. In response, ACC Executive Director stated "the American Coastal Coalition is already hard at work on next year's Corps budget, bringing a delegation of community officials to Capitol Hill in January to push for Congress to provide additional funding, and corralling House and Senate members to make concerted requests for beach funding." This month elected officials from New Jersey made a trip to Washington, and next month the City of Tybee Island, Georgia, plans to make the trip as well to meet with USACE leadership and the city's congressional delegation about its eroded beaches.

NOAA Funding News

Congress is racing to meet a January 31st deadline to pass all 12 appropriations bills in order to avoid another government shutdown. For NOAA, Congress is providing a total of \$6.2 billion compared to \$6.6 billion for the previous year. Of that total, \$4.5 billion is for NOAA operations, research and facilities with the remainder going to procurement, acquisition and construction.

Fate of FEMA Remains Unclear

FEMA remains an embattled agency with Congress pulling to support it and the Trump administration taking steps to reduce its role. Earlier this month, FEMA's leaders advised staff that 1,000 jobs will be eliminated this month from the pool of contractual workers who help facilitate disaster recovery and emergency preparedness in communities. A final report from the President's advisory council on FEMA was due out last month but its release—which was not expected to be good news for the

agency—was indefinitely delayed at the last moment. Meanwhile, *E&E Daily* reported last week that a bipartisan group of a dozen Senators held a secret meeting “to build support for overhauling” FEMA in a bid to counter the Administration’s efforts to downsize its role.

In legislation before Congress as we write, FEMA is due to get a significant increase in funding. Under the final appropriations bill being debated by Congress, the agency would get \$32 billion, an increase of \$4.7 billion. The total includes \$26.4 million for the disaster relief fund which is what FEMA received in the previous year. The legislation includes language prohibiting FEMA from pausing BRIC grants and rejecting proposed staffing reductions.

News Briefs

Of the 300,000 federal employees who lost their jobs in 2025, the *New York Times* reports that almost 3,700 of them worked for the Corps. That’s about 9 percent of the agency’s total workforce. Our sources report that almost all of this total are workers who took the Administration’s early retirement option... A provision in the legislation funding the Executive Office of the President prohibits the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) from spending any money or time on altering the annual spending Work Plan developed by the Corps of Engineers... Another provision in the same bill prohibits OMB from “evaluating or determining” if a water resources project or study submitted by the Chief of Engineers is compliant with “all applicable laws, regulations, and requirements” that apply to the Civil Works planning process. OMB is reported to have ingrained habits to engage of both of these prohibited actions so we will see if these provisions of law are enforced... The EPA has announced that it will no longer consider lives saved when setting its rules. Life and safety are major factors in considering the benefits of projects by the Corps of Engineers. The Corps has not announced whether it will change its practices to conform with EPA’s... Some *WaterLog* readers have noticed that we still use the term Department of Defense rather than the Administration’s proposed change to Department of War. That’s because Congress would have to make the change of the agency’s name, and it has shown no interest so far in doing so.

Legislative Update

Of the 194 bills we are tracking that have an impact on coastal communities, two became public law late last month: S. 216 (Sen Dan Sullivan, R-AK) requires a review of proposed offshore wind projects on military readiness, radar and sonar capabilities; and H.R. 1491 (Rep. Greg Murphy) the Disaster Related Extension of Deadlines Act, amends the Internal Revenue Code to ensure that taxpayers affected by disasters are not penalized for late filings or payments, and that collection actions are based on adjusted timelines that reflect actual delays caused by disasters, significant fires, or terroristic or military actions. Appropriations legislation reported elsewhere in this issue has also been moving. A full list of the 194 bills can be found [here](#).

Thanks for reading WaterLog!

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