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House Moving on Funding Bills, but Action Stalled in Senate

All of the 12 required appropriations bills will likely have cleared through the House by the end of July, but not one of them has started moving in the Senate. The House has teed up the Energy and Water Development appropriations bill for floor action funding the Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation as well as the Interior and Environment funding bill containing funds for the Environmental Protection Agency followed by the Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations measure with funds for NOAA. No action in the House yet on the Homeland Security funding bill with money for FEMA, but there has been committee approval of the Transportation-HUD bill with funding for the Community Development Block Grant family of programs.

Action is stalled in the Senate by a failure to agree on an overall funding number for all government agencies between Republicans and Democrats caused by the Administration's \$1.5 trillion request for the Defense Department, an almost 45 percent increase from the current year level. That would require cuts to non-defense programs that Senate party leaders cannot agree on. Given the lack of progress, Congress is certain to be unable to pass all 12 funding bills by the start of the fiscal year on October 1st. By the way, Congress has not passed all appropriations bills on time since 1997. During President Trump's second term, the government has already shut down three times due to the failure of Congress to pass its required funding bills. Could a fourth time be in our future?

Once fired FEMA Head, Now Being Rehired

Congress is holding a confirmation hearing this week for Cameron Hamilton to head the Federal Emergency Management Agency, an agency the Administration had once sought to eliminate. In the latest sign that FEMA is here to stay, Hamilton was nominated by the President despite the fact that he had been fired from a temporary job leading the agency because he told a congressional committee that he opposed killing the agency. While we can expect Hamilton to clear through the required Senate approval of his nomination, still unresolved are the reforms that have been proposed by the Administration as well as another

set of recommendations for agency change that have the support of a number of members of Congress.

Corps Changes Policy on Perpetual Easements

For the past several years, the Corps has refused to periodically renourish beaches in Pinellas County, Florida because the County as non-federal sponsor could not provide the required perpetual easements for all homeowners whose properties were in the project area. While homeowners have various reasons for refusing to provide such easements, they boil down to wanting to place limits on the public access and parking requirements which those easements require.

On more than one occasion, Congress has urged the Corps to find common ground with the affected property owners. While negotiations have taken place, Pinellas County had to spend \$125 million of its own funds to renourish the affected shorelines. Faced with pressure from Congress and a desire from the County to get federal financial participation in the future, a settlement was recently announced. Based on a directive from Adam Telle, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, a decision has been made to limit the duration of easements to the 50-year life of the project, rather than the current perpetual length required. In addition, a local ordinance was determined to satisfy public use and access requirements of federal law, thus eliminating the need for each homeowner to sign even a 50-year easement. A similar decision paring back the perpetual easement requirement to one covering the 50-year life of the project was made for a project in Palm Beach County, Florida. We have submitted questions about these decisions to the ASA's office and will have more to write on this issue in future issues of **WaterLog**. Registered subscribers who would like copies of these decisions should email Howard@WaterLog.Net.

Panel Says Corps Not Delivering Projects on Time and Within Cost Estimates

The House Appropriations Committee's Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development is concerned that the Corps is not doing its job delivering projects on time and within cost estimates. In the report accompanying the funding bill now awaiting House floor action, it had this to say: "The Corps is reminded that the maturity of the project design and level of technical detail is the primary factor that determines the class of the estimate; the cost estimate classification cannot come first." The report went on to say: "The Corps is also reminded that the project formulation and delivery process is predicated on partnership. Rather than lapsing communication, stringing along the study or construction process, or focusing attention on project elements that provide little benefit to the Nation, the Corps should focus on improving communication with and providing clear paths forward to project sponsors."

Trump Administration to Dismantle Ocean Observatory Network

A network of deep-sea sensors that has provided continuous, real-time data on ocean temperatures, carbon absorption, circulation patterns, and coastal impacts since 2016 is being dismantled after the National Science Foundation directed its operators to begin removing equipment. The project, known as the Ocean Observatories Initiative, collects

data on temperatures, currents, and the ocean's absorption of carbon dioxide off the coasts of Oregon, Alaska, Washington, and North Carolina, as well as in the Irminger Sea between Iceland and Greenland. The network's more than 900 sensors have provided critical data used to understand how the ocean absorbs greenhouse gases, how marine heat waves threaten commercial fisheries, and how sea levels drive coastal flooding along the East Coast.

A bipartisan group of senators, co-led by Democrat Jeff Merkley of Oregon and Republican Lisa Murkowski of Alaska, sent a letter demanding the NSF halt the dismantling. Merkley called the move "supreme stupidity and a violation of the fundamental distribution of powers," arguing that a congressionally authorized and funded program cannot simply be shut down by the executive branch. The Trump administration had previously proposed 80% funding cuts to the program in both 2025 and 2026, and while Congress restored funding both times, the NSF proceeded with decommissioning anyway.

Administration Proposes Elimination of Critical Coastal Program

For the second year in a row, the Administration's budget request for FY 2027 has proposed zeroing out the Coastal Zone Management Program. The CZM Program exists in 34 states and territories to enable those entities to manage their coastal resources effectively while balancing multiple uses such as energy production, industrial development, shipping and commerce, fishing, recreation, tourism and other coastal needs. The Coastal States Organization is heading the effort to save this program by getting as many organizations and individuals as possible to [sign onto](#) a statement of support asking for the CZM program to receive the funding it needs to function effectively.

Coastal Legislative Status Report

We've got our sights set on a long list of 242 bills that affect coastal communities. Several have passed the Senate and are awaiting action by the full House. These are S. 843, the Sea Turtle Assistance and Rehabilitation Act (Markey, D-MA); S. 2245, to Amend the Digital Coast Act (Baldwin, D-WI); S. 725, Enhancing First Response Act (Klobuchar, D-MN); S. 759, Modernizing Access to Our Public Oceans Act (Cruz, R-TX); and S. 93, Harmful Algal Bloom and Hypoxia Research and Control Amendments (Sullivan, R-AK). House-passed bills awaiting Senate floor action include H.R. 5200, Emergency Reporting Act (Matsui, D-CA). For a full list of coastal bills we're tracking and their status, [click here](#).

Thanks for reading WaterLog!

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