



Government Affairs: 2018 Year in Review

ASBPA's 2018 Government Affairs agenda continued to focus on three main areas: 1) **Federal Funding**, including advocating for funding for coastal projects and coastal research, and changing policies and authorities to allow federal funding to be used for coastal resilience; 2) **Expediting coastal projects** through more efficient permitting and better integration of private industry and stakeholder engagement in project delivery; and 3) **Regional coordination and planning** on coastal projects, focusing on implementing and funding the South Atlantic Coastal Study (SACS).

Our federal funding advocacy was primarily focused on three bills: 1) a disaster response supplemental appropriations bill following the 2017 hurricane season; 2) the FY19 federal budget; and 3) the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). After successfully advocating for a disaster response bill to include funding for rebuilding damaged projects as well as building new beach projects in areas impacted by the 2017 storms, we were thrilled the Disaster Supplemental bill passed in February. The bill included over \$15 billion for flood risk management projects, including hundreds of million for studies and investigations at full federal expense. This has led to perhaps the largest single investment by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) for beach restoration, funding dozens of beach and coastal projects across eight states.

2018 also saw the first on-time Energy & Water (E&W) Appropriations Bill (FY19) in over a decade. ASBPA was pleased to see a small increase in shore protection funding and funding dedicated to implementing the beneficial use of dredge material pilot projects we worked to get authorized in 2016. Also included in the E&W appropriations was an increase in research funding that will directly benefit the U.S. Coastal Research Program that our science & technology committee has been working on.

WRDA passed in 2018 as part of a larger water infrastructure bill. Although some of the more reform minded provisions we sought – related to USACE budgeting and the Corps' use of a benefit-cost-ratio – were shifted from policy changes into studies, we were still pleased with some incremental progress. WRDA'18 included a provision to improve beach project resilience after a major storm, increased the authorization for the beneficial use of dredge material pilot projects, and authorized a new beach program to support cross state & cross district budgeting.



Senator Tom Carper (DE) speaking about WRDA at the National Coastal Summit.

Finally we are working with U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to find ways for beach projects that utilize sand in CBRA zones to receive federal funding to improve their resilience.

Our **advocacy on expediting coastal projects** has largely focused on the getting USACE to quickly implement the projects funded by the disaster supplemental. This was a central topic of the conversation that ASBPA had with incoming South Atlantic Division of USACE Gen. Diana Holland in March. We have also

met with USACE district and senior leadership at headquarters on the need for these projects to be implemented quickly.



ASBPA meeting with Gen. Holland and staff at USACE South Atlantic Division.

ASBPA continues to advocate for regulatory timelines to be reduced. We have been active participants in USACE's stakeholder outreach on the administration's infrastructure initiative and efforts to reduce permitting timeframes. We also continue to work with National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) to identify ways they can be more efficient in reviewing and permitting applications. We have been pleased to see some significant strides taken, particularly in the southeast region, to reduce the permitting backlog.

Finally, we were thrilled to support the tremendous response to the "Sec 1122" beneficial use of dredged material pilot project – 95 projects were submitted for the ten available projects, demonstrating overwhelming public support for the program. However, USACE has been very slow in announcing the final recipients, and we continue to push them to announce and implement these projects.

Our efforts on **regional planning** in 2018 focused on the Southeast and the Great Lakes. In 2016 WRDA, we helped get a "South Atlantic Coastal Study (SACS)" authorized to examine coastal vulnerability to storms and sea level rise resulting in proposed coordinated solutions across the region of USACE South Atlantic Division, which covers the coast from North Carolina to Mississippi and includes Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. We were pleased to see the USACE include \$12 million – at full federal expense – for the SACS in the work plan for the disaster supplemental. As implementation of this study begins we hope to play an active role in engaging local communities for the study.

In 2018, we also supported efforts by the Coastal States Organization (CSO) to launch the Great Lakes Coastal Resilience study as a partnership of three USACE districts and eight great lakes states. The Great Lakes study was authorized in WRDA'18 and was provided funding and a new start authorization in the FY19 USACE workplan.

In addition to the above priorities, ASBPA has **fought back against threats to cut funding** for coastal projects in the Gulf, supported the House of Representatives' **Coastal Communities Caucus and Estuaries Caucus**, and **advocated for funding for coastal science** at NOAA, USGS and BOEM. It's been a busy 2018 for ASBPA's Government Affairs and we are pleased with the success we have had. ASBPA remains a prominent force on the national stage for sound federal beach and coastal policy. We are proud of what we've accomplished (and prevented) in 2018. As we look forward to building on this progress in 2019, even as a divided Congress forebodes significant gridlock on budgetary and legislative matters, we believe ASBPA's mission and past success will continue to effect policy and be a strong voice for its members.



Briefing hosted by ASBPA and CSO in the Senate Commerce hearing room.