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ASBPA & Coastal States Organization commend Water Bill, urge passage

The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) and Coastal States Organization (CSO) commend the U.S. House of Representative and U.S. Senate for the introduction of the bipartisan Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020 and **encourage Congress to pass this legislation before the end of the year.**

This bill contains numerous provisions to improve the resiliency of our nation's coastlines, including supporting better management of coastal sediment and advancing natural infrastructure that can reduce flood and coastal storm risk to coastal communities. Passing a WRDA every congress is essential to effective coastal management, allowing the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to better work with states and local partners to plan, build, maintain, and manage critical coastal projects.

ASBPA and CSO have long advocated for policies that advance:

- **Regional Sediment Management (RSM)** and the **Beneficial Use of Dredged Material (BUDM)**;
- A modification of the USACE **Benefit-Cost-Ratio (BCR)** process;
- **Natural Infrastructure** used for flood risk reduction.

WRDA 2020 includes policies to do each of these critical aspects of coastal management.

ASBPA and CSO are particularly supportive of the following policies and sections in WRDA:

The Beneficial Use of Dredged Material

BUDM is one aspect of RSM, in which sediment dredged for navigation purposes is used to benefit a restoration and/or flood risk reduction project. Ultimately, ASBPA and CSO believe it is a national priority that that USACE evolve its budgeting and planning operations to reflect RSM principles so that **100% of uncontaminated dredged sediment is used beneficially.**

Section 125 establishes that “It is the policy of the United States for the Corps of Engineers to maximize the beneficial reuse... of suitable dredged material.” It advances this policy by:

- a) requiring each USACE district to produce an annual five-year sediment management plan that forecasts expected sediment removal (i.e., dredging) and placement needs, and includes public input;
- b) requiring USACE to consider “the suitability... of beneficial uses” and “the economic and environmental benefits... of... those beneficial uses” when evaluating the placement of dredged material;
- c) Increases the number authorized pilot projects under the WRDA 2016 Sec. 1122 BUDM pilot program.

Improving the Corps’ Benefit Cost Ratio

Congress should modernize the criteria used by USACE to assess costs and benefits during navigation and flood risk reduction project planning by accounting for increased ecosystem services and recreation-driven economic stimulus as project benefits. While WRDA does not provide transformational overhaul of the USACE BCR process, it took the following important steps to improve current operating procedures which ASBPA and CSO support:

Section 110 directs USACE to issue final agency procedures for the Principles, Requirements, and Guidelines (PR&G), pursuant to section 2031 of WRDA 2007. The PR&G serves as the basis for the USACE evaluations of project benefits and costs.

Section 124 provides a Sense of Congress that USACE should maximize the consideration and evaluation of projects with multiple benefits.

Improving Resilience of Coastlines and Coastal Communities

From sea level rise and Great Lakes level rise to increasing coastal storm intensity, the threats facing our nation’s coastlines have never been greater. Preparing our coastlines for future conditions will mean using the best available science, long-term planning, adaptive management, and a commitment to building projects that can both adapt to a changing climate and solve multiple problems at once. In short, USACE must help our coastline and coastal communities become more resilient in partnership with state and local governments.

ASBPA and CSO support the following provisions in WRDA to allow USACE to improve communities’ coastal resilience:

Section 113 requires USACE to update existing planning guidance related to sea level rise and increased inland flooding, and to calculate and consider anticipated project benefits accrued over time to address sea level rise and increased inland flooding.

Section 111 allows USACE to provide technical assistance on resiliency planning to non-federal interests and to prioritize technical assistance to economically disadvantaged communities.

Section 211 reminds USACE that WRDA 2018 requires a Great Lakes coastal resilience study and provides further direction on the contents of the study, directs USACE to expand its comprehensive assessment of water resources needs for the Great Lakes System, and directs

USACE to make recommendations for potential projects and other measures to respond to changing hydrologic and climatic conditions in the region.

Advancing natural infrastructure that reduce risk in coastal communities

Wide beaches, high dunes, and verdant wetlands, reefs, mangroves, and seagrass beds are natural infrastructure that can improve communities' resilience and is itself resilient, and also provide significant tourism and recreational benefits as well. Dunes and marshes can adapt to rising seas, and reefs and coastal forests regenerate after storm damage. USACE has been maintaining and building beaches and dunes for flood risk reduction for nearly a century and restoring aquatic ecosystems for more than half a century. USACE should be looking at how to fully integrate these missions in combination with its mandate to maintain coastal navigation. By doing so, USACE can more effectively restore and rebuild our nation's natural infrastructure, in collaboration with other federal, state, and tribal entities.

WRDA includes many sections that advance natural infrastructure in various aspects of planning, project development and funding, including **Sections 114, 115, 116, and 123**. We are pleased to see the inclusion of numerous provision around this topic and hope Congress will continue to enhance these policies in future iterations of WRDA.

Conclusion

ASBPA and CSO are pleased that WRDA 2020 takes significant steps to direct USACE to better manage sediment, improve coastal resilience, and advance natural infrastructure. We applaud the House and Senate for their bipartisan work in drafting this bill, which also serves to authorize numerous studies and construction projects to restore coastlines and reduce communities' risk from coastal hazards. We encourage Congress to pass this legislation before the end of the 2020.

ABOUT ASBPA: Founded in 1926, the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that advocates for healthy coastlines by promoting the integration of science, policies and actions that maintain, protect and enhance the coasts of America. For more information on ASBPA, go to www.asbpa.org, www.facebook.com/AmericanBeaches or www.twitter.com/asbpa.

ABOUT CSO: The Coastal States Organization (CSO) represents the Nation's Coastal States, Territories & Commonwealths on ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes resource issues. For more information on CSO, go to <http://www.coastalstates.org/>, <https://www.facebook.com/CoastalStatesOrganization>, or https://twitter.com/coastal_states.