



American Shore and Beach Preservation Association and Coastal States Organization Joint Beach and Inlet Management Policy



Introduction

The Coastal States Organization (CSO) represents the nation’s coastal states, territories, and commonwealths on ocean, coastal, and Great Lakes issues. The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) is dedicated to merging science and policy to preserve, protect, and enhance the beaches, shores, and coastal systems of the United States of America. Together these organizations represent state, local government, industry, academic, and community stakeholder interests in managing and maintaining healthy beaches, dunes, and coastal inlets together with responsible coastal development.

The U.S. coasts face unprecedented challenges including rising sea and lake levels, increasing storm intensity, coastal erosion, and lack of available sediment. The Coastal Zone Management Act provides an important framework for federal-state collaboration to address these issues. A historic influx of funds has recently been made available for coastal protection and restoration through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act. While this investment marks significant progress, increased sustainable and predictable funding from Congress, federal agencies, states and territories, over the long-term will be needed to tackle these issues into the future. Coastal managers need funding, robust science, including real-time data and information, and effective national policies and technical assistance for sediment management, permitting, and shoreline development to balance the multiple uses and values of our coastal resources, while ensuring those values are maintained or improved for future generations.

Managing beaches and inlets takes coordination across federal, state, tribal and local authorities. It also takes engaged and sustained community, stakeholder and rightsholder input. Additionally, some US beaches and inlets are under sovereign stewardship of tribal nations, while many other parts of the US coast have deep ties to tribal and indigenous cultures; these must be stewarded in ways that uphold tribal sovereignty and respect cultural needs. The following policies all presuppose engagement with rightsholders, stakeholders and communities.

CSO and ASBPA strongly support the following five policy positions and commit to working together with Congress and federal agencies, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM), U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), and others, to see these objectives fulfilled.

Policy 1: Sediment Management

Beaches and inlets are dynamic features that change based upon the flow of sediment through coastal systems. Properly valuing and managing sediment supports balanced coastal uses, which is essential to the ecosystem health, economic vitality, and resilience of coastal states, territories and communities.

Congress and federal agencies should ensure that uncontaminated dredged sediment is beneficially used, through:

1. Implementation of a national policy on Regional Sediment Management (RSM) and the Beneficial Use of Dredged Material (BUDM) consistent with the purposes of Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) 2020 § 125 that:
 - a. Defines uncontaminated sediment as a resource to support public benefits, which include ecosystem restoration and resilience to coastal hazards and storm damage reduction, among others;
 - b. Prioritizes and funds the beneficial use of uncontaminated dredged material from federal dredging projects, except in cases where a suitable placement site cannot be identified;
 - c. Establishes a new national understanding of the federal standard where, as part of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) determinations of the “least cost alternative” for the disposal of dredged materials, the USACE includes the economic evaluation (including long-term costs and costs avoided) of coastal sediment for public benefits;
 - d. Maintains a nationwide inventory of coastal sediment needs and availability including offshore, nearshore and potential upstream sources, to plan for future use and maximize availability for public benefits, in coordination with the Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management Marine Minerals Service, the US Geologic Survey Coastal Marine Resources and Hazards Program, and others; and
 - e. Assesses and mitigates adverse impacts to the littoral system caused by navigation, coastal development, construction, or other similar projects;
 - f. Ensures all BUDM projects are planned through robust stakeholder engagement, which includes state, local impacted communities, industry, NGOs, and other relevant parties.
2. Regional (multi-state) resilience studies and/or plans that identify sediment needs and availabilities to enable optimal use of sediment resources;
3. Implementation of 5 year Dredged Material Management Plans (DMMPs) in each District in coordination with states, territories and other stakeholders, to optimize use of dredged sediment, including:
 - a. Publicly available inventories of implemented and anticipated sediment dredging and placement projects within a USACE district; and
 - b. Integrate DMMPs with regional assessments of sediment availability, such as the SAND study in the South Atlantic Coastal Study (SACS).
4. Federal funding and technical assistance for state coastal management programs and local government partners to plan, prioritize, and implement beneficial use projects, by:
 - a. Identifying opportunities to leverage cross agency funding sources and promote cost saving benefits (ex: FEMA);
 - b. Supporting operations, maintenance, and monitoring of projects to promote a holistic, sustainable approach to sediment management that reduces erosion and enhances the resilience of coastal communities while reducing project costs and making the best use of available resources and simultaneously restoring eroding areas that are relied upon by migratory birds and other species, preserving critical habitats and biodiversity
 - c. Maintaining a resilient supply of sediment over the long-term; and
 - d. Establishing a federal cost-share for RSM planning (maintain existing programs and develop new strategies);
5. Technical, environmental, and financial support for RSM activities within the USACE in partnership with coastal states and territories;

Policy 2: Permitting

Beach and inlet management and restoration rely on strong environmental protections to maintain the health and ecological value of these systems. Optimizing the timeliness, efficiency, and effectiveness of regulatory review for projects occurring along beaches and inlets is critical to ensuring the functioning and restoration of multiuse coastlines.

Congress and federal agencies should promote timely and efficient permitting of beach and inlet management projects, while upholding all environmental standards, by:



1. Funding federal permitting agencies at a level commensurate with the permitting demand to enable efficient, coordinated permit approval and enforcement process;
2. Providing dedicated and predictable funding to applicable federal and state regulatory agencies to advance upfront coordination and meet project deadlines;
3. Having states and territories serve as centralized coordinators for state and federal permitting to create efficiencies through voluntary and innovative regional and state-led permitting approaches, such as but not limited to:
 - a. Programmatic, integrated Biological Opinions to meet Endangered Species Act requirements for coastal threatened and endangered species in coordination with the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
 - b. Programmatic, integrated Essential Fisheries Habitat (EFH) assessments to meet Magnuson Fishery Conservation Act requirements in coordination with NMFS; and/or
 - c. General Permits or other agency-to-agency agreements with the USACE for beach and inlet management projects within state waters that allow state programs to lead coordinated federal/state permit reviews;
4. Requiring that various permitting reviews needed for state and federal approval are conducted concurrently; and
5. Ensure state and federal permitting regulations are based on best available science.

Policy 3: Funding

As beaches and inlets face greater physical changes in the coming century than in all of human history, coastal states, territories and communities need dedicated funding for projects and effective management, guided by data-driven prioritization that considers future coastal conditions. While the Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill and the Inflation Reduction Act have provided for critical investments over a five-year period, sustainable and predictable funding is needed over the long-run.

Congress and federal agencies should establish dedicated and predictable funding for coastal flood risk, storm damage reduction, coastal erosion control, and long-term inundation preparedness projects, by:

1. Requiring the USACE, in coordination with each coastal state, to develop and update a 10-year schedule of priorities for federally authorized beach and inlet projects;
2. Investing in state and federal coordinated planning for projects to support timely and efficient permitting and implementation;
3. Supporting collaborative (federal, state, and local) planning, construction, and management of projects through systems-based and/or watershed-based approaches;
4. Finalizing a better cost-share standard that reduces barriers for economically challenged and/or otherwise disadvantaged communities;
5. Authorizing USACE to implement coastal erosion control projects based on developed methodologies, standards, best practices, and economic analyses;
6. Publicly listing all federally authorized coastal projects with their study, construction, and funding status; and
7. Providing funding to local communities, states, territories, and appropriate federal agencies (e.g. NOAA, USFWS, USACE) for enhanced resilience and improved ecological functions of existing beach and inlet management projects;
8. Authorizing and funding USACE to plan and develop coastal adaptation projects for long term (50-200 year) sea level rise and lake level change projections in coordination with local communities, states, territories, and other federal agencies, by:
 - a. Assessing sustainability of all USACE coastal flood risk, navigation, and ecological restoration projects, and developing post-authorization plans;
 - b. Using long term inundation projections and the nationwide inventory of sediment needs and availability (see Policy 1: Sediment Management (1)(d)) to prioritize existing and proposed projects based on long term economic viability; and
 - c. Identifying where vulnerable coastal infrastructure – once damaged - should be rebuilt with added resilience elements, redesigned in a new more resilient method, or relocated (or some combination thereof).



Policy 4: Development

Development along the coastlines needs to change. Coastal property and infrastructure are threatened by sea level rise, lake level change, and increasing coastal storm intensity, which also exacerbate on-going challenges of coastal erosion and inundation. Coastal states, territories and communities need policies and procedures to ensure beaches and inlets can migrate and adapt to changing coastlines to support the range of uses in the coastal zone.

Congress and federal agencies should encourage responsible beachfront building setbacks, redevelopment standards, and construction practices, including relocation programs to enable inland migration of beach and inlet habitats, by:

1. Providing funding through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for relocation or removal of structures that are under imminent threat of collapse due to shoreline erosion and/or regular tidal scouring, including by:
 - a. Expanding FEMA mitigation programs to fund relocation or removal of structures under imminent threat of loss due to coastal erosion;
 - b. Considering options for National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to fund relocation or removal of structures under imminent threat; and
2. Better aligning the FEMA Community Rating System credits with successful beach management practices and outcomes;
3. Prioritizing natural infrastructure (ie., “nature-based”) solutions for coastal resilience across federal agencies, by providing funding to:
 - a. FEMA to consider beach and inlet management needs in all state, county, and local hazard mitigation planning and disaster mitigation funding programs, including Hazard Mitigation Assistance (including Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities, Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, and Flood Mitigation Assistance), Safeguarding Tomorrow Revolving Loan Fund Program, and Public Assistance Mitigation;
 - b. USACE to utilize natural infrastructure where feasible;
 - c. NOAA to support state and local implementation of natural infrastructure resilience projects.
4. Continuing support for federal and state coastal management programs and local governments to formulate, adopt, and implement appropriate shoreline and beachfront setbacks, design, construction, and redevelopment standards;
 - a. Limit federal incentives to develop previously undeveloped coastal/beachfront areas, while not restricting potential restoration or resilience activities in neighboring communities.
5. Requiring all federally-funded programs and federal grant funding for coastal adaptation and relocation programs (including through the Department of Transportation, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, etc.) to allow for beach migration, recognizing public trust lands, resources, and uses (including public access rights); and
6. Coordinating federal agency actions that regulate, manage, or promote coastal infrastructure through the Council on Environmental Quality or other entity to ensure that public trust rights to the coast are considered.



Policy 5: Research

Beach and inlet management must be based on the best available science. Ensuring high quality coastal data acquisition, research, modeling, and mapping that is usable by coastal managers is essential for coastal states, territories, and communities to make timely and risk-informed decisions.

Congress and federal agencies should support and improve coastal data acquisition, research, modeling, and mapping capabilities to better prepare coastal communities to manage their beaches and inlets for future conditions by:

1. Funding on-going data collection and long-term monitoring of physical coastal conditions including: land, lake and sea level elevations; nearshore bathymetry; offshore sand sources (see policy 1.1.d); wave, tidal and current metrics, etc.;
2. Using robust data on physical coastal conditions to improve accuracy of localized lake and sea level elevation modeling, coastal flooding and storm surge modeling, and other modeling needs, to inform beach and inlet management decision making;
3. Coordinating and implementing efficiencies across federal, state, and local beach mapping programs, by:
 - a. Ensuring the inclusion of beach and inlet data sets and layers in existing national- and regional-level data portals;
 - b. Identifying efficiencies within existing programs for coastal and shoreline mapping and monitoring at the federal, state, and local levels; and
 - c. Funding and providing technical support for states, territories, and local communities to develop high resolution modeling based on fine scale data sets and flood scenario visualization tools; and
4. Funding federal, state, and local coastal research programs and competitive research grants that support beach and inlet management.

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