

News Release

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FY 2007 CORPS BUDGET PROPOSAL GETS AN “F” FOR FAILURE TO PROTECT AMERICANS FROM STORM DAMAGE

With another storm season fast approaching, the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) has charged the Administration with failing to protect the millions of Americans who live in areas that could be inundated by major storms in its budget proposal released yesterday. Harry Simmons, the President of ASBPA, was especially critical of the White House Office of Management and Budget, who compiles the President’s budget. “For 20 years, OMB has consistently shortchanged America’s water resource needs by providing inadequate funding for our nation’s vital water infrastructure. Over the past four years, they have worked zealously to deny federal planning and funding to all but some of the largest flood control and storm damage protection projects in the nation. Yet, when disaster strikes, the finger of blame is pointed at FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers, not the ones who left the nation unprepared. Then, taxpayers must pick up the tab as billions of dollars are spent recovering from disasters, much of which could have been avoided had OMB supported the reasonable levels of annual funding that executive branch agencies annually request.”

Simmons claims that OMB is trying to decimate the Corps of Engineers, the agency responsible for managing our nations’ water infrastructure. “The FY 2007 budget puts two hands firmly on the throat of the Corps’ study program and squeezes tightly,” he claimed. Outside of three studies dealing with last year’s hurricanes, there is only \$15 to \$20 million of study money to cover well over 100 studies that are named in the budget. That kind of budgeting takes nickel-and-diming to an astounding new low and does not allow the Corps to effectively plan for new and reoccurring challenges our water infrastructure will face. Without a strong

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planning capability, the Corps will become an operations & maintenance agency, not one that can respond to keeping our ports and waterways competitive in the 21st century, or keep our coastal and riverine residents safe from flooding and storms.”

Simmons also expressed concern about the impact of severely cutting funding for Corps studies on local governments. “The budget says to the local communities that are paying half the cost of these studies, ‘We’re going to drag these studies out for years so they cost state and local taxpayers far more than you agreed to pay. And if that doesn’t scare you away, then we’ve got a draconian set of hurdles you have to go through before you even get a chance to be recommended for construction funding.’ For coastal storm damage reduction projects, OMB has taken this a step further by consistently trying to break contractual agreements that states and localities had every right to believe would be honored. Such renegeing is a prescription for undermining public confidence in the federal government as a partner in meeting any of America’s essential needs.

“Cutting the Corps’ study budget by more than 80 percent also sends a message to the talented professionals based in the Corps’ districts nationwide that it’s time to find another job. Furthermore, it discourages young professionals from choosing the Corps as a career.”

To address these issues, ASBPA calls on its members and other interested parties to come to Washington, D.C. for a Coastal Summit March 1 through 3 to protest the proposed budget cuts. “We have battled successfully for a strong federal coastal program for the past 10 years, with Congress as our partner. Until there is an Administration (of either party) that understands the importance that needs to be given to all types of vitally-important water resource projects, we will just have to continue to urge Congress to fill the void.”