Dear Senators and Representatives,

The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM), its 35 State Chapters and more than 15,000 members, are very pleased that the Senate and House of Representatives have passed their respective water resources bills, the first since 2007, and a critical component in Federal efforts to reduce the costs and disruption caused by flood disasters.

We are writing to draw your attention to two key opportunities that a new water resources law presents and to encourage the Conference Committee to include these measures in the HR 3080 Conference Report.

1. **Enhanced investment proposed by the Senate for important Corps of Engineers technical assistance programs – Flood Plain Management Services (FPMS), Planning Assistance to States (PAS) and Silver Jackets.** These programs bring Corps technical expertise to assist state and local officials working to evaluate their flood risk management options. They are a highly cost-effective way for the federal government to increase state and local capacity to reduce the costs of future flood disasters.

![Dedicated to reducing flood risk and losses in the nation.](image-url)
Requests for this technical assistance through PAS and FPMS currently and historically exceed capacities of those programs by orders of magnitude. This confirms the value of these programs to nonfederal efforts to address flood challenges where large-scale federal flood control projects are unlikely to be feasible, and reduce nonfederal dependence on federal disaster relief.

Silver Jackets, PAS, and FPMS have a proven record of success in reducing risk and cost, while reinforcing state and local control and responsibility for managing floodplains and reducing flood risk. For these reasons, ASFPM strongly supports the increases in authorizations for these programs proposed by the Senate.

2. Creation of the National Levee Safety Program proposed by the Senate as part of the Federal response to large disasters and continued challenges with levees throughout the nation. We particularly note the following needs:

- Expansion of the National Levee Inventory to include non-federal structures;
- Creation of a National Levee Safety Board to develop safety guidelines and guide the development of State Levee Safety Programs nationwide;
- Alignment of state and local hazard mitigation plans with levee safety activities; and
- Creation of the Levee Rehabilitation Assistance Program to support nonfederal efforts to reduce risks associated with levees as outlined in the Senate WRDA, including robust conditions for eligibility.

We recognize that the inclusion of a new assistance program needs to be compared to the reductions in federal disaster relief that would be achieved by this investment. We also recognize the need for the new assistance program to be highly competitive and incentivize nonfederal innovation, rewarding those who demonstrate leadership and commitment to address their levee challenges.

For these reasons, ASFPM recommends that the eligibility conditions proposed by the Senate be expanded to include the following:

- Assistance should only be available to applicants in states that have an approved State Levee Safety Program, consistent with the program guidelines to be established by the Secretary;
- Requiring levee owners or communities who may receive Federal assistance to address levee challenges to the fullest possible extent under nonfederal authorities prior to becoming eligible for Federal assistance, including adopting and implementing a flood risk management plan for leved areas; and
- Eligible activities need to provide for the full range of flood mitigation activities, as defined by the Senate bill, and not just for levee rehabilitation, to encourage applicants to address their levee challenges using approaches best suited for their unique situation, including measures to reduce flood elevations and velocities, and to reduce the consequences of levee overtopping or failure.
While other provisions of both bills present opportunities and causes for concern, we view these provisions as the most important to reducing flood risk throughout the nation and recommend these elements for inclusion in the HR 3080 Conference Report. These provisions outlined above will significantly improve our nation’s capacity to manage flood risk and help reduce the costs of future flood disasters. They will reinforce the effective roles of each level of government in reducing flood risk and managing water resources. If we can provide additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

William Nechamen, CFM  Chad Berginnis, CFM  
ASFPM Chair  ASFPM Executive Director