



ASSOCIATION OF STATE FLOODPLAIN MANAGERS, INC.

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Outside Witness Testimony for Programs under the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for Fiscal year 2017

Submitted To:

House Committee on Appropriations

Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science, and Related Agencies

Submitted by:

Chad Berginnis, Executive Director, Association of State Floodplain Managers

The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the Fiscal Year 2017 budget request of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and National Weather Service (NWS). ASFPM is a non-profit association of state and local officials as well as engineers, planners and other professionals who support those officials. The ASFPM has 17,000 members nationwide and 36 chapters that represent 41 states. The mission of the membership is reduction of loss of life and property due to flooding.

Today we are writing in support of programs critical to flood loss reduction and floodplain protection under NOAA. Today, our nation's coasts are as vital for our future as they are vulnerable. As a result of their increasing recreational, residential, and economic appeal, there are more pressures on our coastal and ocean resources. This demand, combined with an increase in natural hazards such as sea level rise, extreme weather, and other flooding events, highlight the danger of losing these invaluable national assets. Despite the difficult budgetary times, adequate and sustained funding is needed to support the key programs that are on the front lines of this daily battle, which continually advance coastal and ocean science, research, and technology to manage our coastal and ocean resources for future generations.

NOAA Programs engaged in these important efforts and working to balance the protection of coastal and ocean resources with the sustainable development of the coasts include the: Digital Coast Partnership, Coastal Zone Management Program, Regional Coastal Resiliency Grants, and National Estuarine Research Reserves and the National Weather Service. These programs provide direct grants to states, funding for important research, and provide critical data during flood events – all important to managing flood risk and reducing flood losses.

Digital Coast Partnership

The NOAA office for Coastal Management (OCM – within the National Ocean Service) has been leading the innovative Digital Coast Partnership over the past several years. The Digital Coast is both a partnership and information management initiative whereby NOAA leverages the partnership's ideas, resources, and feedback to provide relevant, science based tools and services (i.e., informative data sets, tools, training) for use by floodplain managers, planners, and decision makers. The freely available data and tools are made available through the Digital Coast [website](#) and can be used by state regional and local entities in all of their flood loss reduction, and ecosystem management. ASFPM is proud to be a founding member of the Digital Coast Partnership along with other national organizations such as the American Planning Association, the Coastal States Organization, Urban Land Institute, National Association of Counties, the Nature Conservancy and others.

Tools and data created by the Digital Coast will be critical to long term coastal community resiliency and adaptation in the face of threats such as more intense tropical storms and sea level rise. **Funded out of the Office of Coastal Management operational budget, ASFPM wholeheartedly supports full resourcing of the Digital Coast Partnership and its continuation.**

Coastal Zone Management Program

This funding will be allocated among the 34 states and territories that have approved coastal zone management programs. Pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA), states partner with NOAA to implement coastal zone management programs designed to balance the need to maintain productive coastal and ocean resources with the need for the sustainable development of coastal communities.

States have the flexibility to develop programs, policies, and strategies targeted to their state priorities while concurrently advancing national goals. Under the CZMA program, the states receive grants from NOAA, which are then matched with state funding and then often further leveraged with private and local funds. These grants have been used to support and enhance coastal economies by resolving conflicts between competing coastal uses, reducing environmental impacts of coastal development, and providing critical assistance to local communities in coastal planning and resource protection.

State coastal zone management programs reflect a unique and successful federal-state partnership. Coastal management has become a national priority, as they are critical to building coastal resilience against extreme weather events and educating and guiding communities to build their homes and businesses in ways that minimize the threat of loss. Events like Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Katrina reinforced the importance of planning ahead. Coastal zone management programs ensure that the national interest in a resilient coast is incorporated in state actions, while respecting the sovereignty, different priorities, and geographic variations of our diverse states.

Because the CZMA state grants have essentially remained at an even funding level for a decade, resulting in decreased capacity in state coastal zone management programs and less funding available to communities, ASFPM supports increased funding for this important program.

Regional Coastal Resiliency Grants (RCRG)

ASFPM supports the President's request that the RCRG program be funded at \$20 million in FY17. The RCRG program provides grants that are being used to fund projects that are helping coastal communities to better prepare for, recover from and mitigate against extreme weather events, climate hazards, and changing ocean conditions. The focus is on comprehensive regional approaches that use science-based solutions and rely on collaborative partnerships to ensure success. In FY16 there were over 130 applications for \$100 million.

National Estuarine Research Reserve System

ASFPM appreciates the investment Congress has made in the National Estuarine Research Reserve System over the past 42 years. Because of your support, this system has grown into a network 28 protected places protecting over 1.3 million acres of land and water in perpetuity where more than 36,000 people use research reserves to address critical challenges like how to balance conservation with economic growth, plan for changing sea levels and extreme storms that will lead to increased flooding, protect nursery habitat that supports fishing, and prepare our children to be wise stewards of these precious resources in the future. This unique state-federal partnership brings the scientific expertise and financial investment of NOAA into coastal communities across the country. Investments in the research reserves support locally implemented science-based coastal resource management, research, and education programs to meet national priorities as mandated by Congress in the Coastal Zone Management Act of 1972.

National Weather Service (NWS)

Finally, the National Weather Service anchors a critically important aspect of flood loss reduction – flood forecasting and flood warning. The services, tools and data provided by the NWS can help communities and individuals reduce flood exposure through early warnings. Warnings for major floods occurring in 2015 in Texas, South Carolina, Missouri and Illinois provided important and actionable information to property owners for evacuation and protection of vulnerable assets. **ASFPM supports the President's request in FY17 to implement the Integrated Water Prediction initiative and funding request of an increase of \$12.25 million.**

Thank you for considering the views of the Association of State Floodplain Managers. We would be glad to respond to any questions. Please contact Chad Berginnis, ASFPM Executive Director at cberginnis@floods.org or at 608-828-3000.