

# Coastal Connection

Published by Marlowe & Company, LLC  
Washington, DC

May 15, 2006  
Volume 4, Issue 10



## Current Issues in Washington

The House of Representatives will consider a series of FY07 appropriations bills this week [see story on this page]. The stalled Budget Resolution could also come to the House floor if leaders are able to resolve disagreements about spending levels with moderate House Republicans.

The House may also take up the reauthorization of the Coastal Barrier Resources Act, S. 1869.

The Senate is expected to consider the contentious immigration reform legislation this week.

President Bush is scheduled to address the nation this evening about the immigration issue.

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The Coastal Connection is published weekly when Congress is in session, or as events warrant.

## Update on FY 2007 Appropriations Process

Last week, the House Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee approved its FY07 spending bill that provides funding for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the U.S. Department of Energy.

The full Appropriations Committee is scheduled to consider the bill tomorrow, May 16th.

Project-specific funding information is expected to be available after the full Committee approves the bill. This information will be printed in the next edition of the *Coastal Connection* after it is released by the Committee.

The Subcommittee recommended \$5 billion for the Corps of Engineers. This amount is \$251 million above President Bush's FY07

budget request and \$345 million below the current year's funding level when adjusted for emergency supplemental funds.

In other appropriations-related news, the full House is scheduled to consider the FY07 Agriculture, Interior-Environment, and Military Construction-VA bills this week.

Conference negotiations continue this week on the latest emergency supplemental appropriations bill that will provide funds for hurricane recovery, military operations, and pandemic flu preparations.

President Bush has threatened to veto the supplemental bill if lawmakers send him anything over his request of \$92.2 billion. The Senate included \$108.9 billion in its version of the bill.

## Northeast Urged to Prepare for Hurricane Season

Press reports from last week note that the National Weather Service warned that a even a low intensity hurricane (Category 2) could "wreak havoc" in New York City and surrounding areas because the region has not had to deal

with a severe hurricane since Gloria hit in 1985.

However, the government forecasters did not say whether or not they predict a severe hurricane to hit during this year's season.

## Corps Leader Focuses on Maintaining Agency's Planning Capability

In a May 5th memorandum to all Corps of Engineers Division Offices, Major General Don Riley, Director of Civil Works, has focused the agency's attention on "the importance of civil works planning to the Corps Civil Works Program and to the nation."

General Riley notes that congressional support for Corps investigations (or studies) has been strong. "However, the FY 2007 President's Budget presents a different picture," notes General Riley. "Although the budget recommendation of \$94 million is almost the same as the \$95 million in the President's FY06 budget, \$45 million is for national levee inventory and the Louisiana Coastal Area (LCA) Study and Sciences Board." Congress appropriated \$164 million for studies in FY '06, nearly doubling the President's request.

General Riley cautioned his Division Commanders "not to take draconian actions on the level of your planning staff" based on the President's budget recommendation. In short, don't cut back on staff

until Congress finishes with the budget in the fall. Hopefully this message will reach Corps Districts, as well, where there have been reports of serious concern that current planning staff levels can be maintained.

General Riley's memo discusses the importance of the Corps Planning for Excellent Program and of the role of the Planning Centers of Expertise. While the General's memo does not address the Hurricane and Storm Damage Center of Expertise, which is based in the North Atlantic Division, there is a growing need for the Center to be funded so that it can provide assistance to several Districts that are short of experienced coastal project planners. In addition, as the Corps coastal program expands its work on the Gulf and west Coasts, there are new engineering and project formulation challenges for which even experienced staff need help. Currently, all Centers of Expertise get their funding from the studies they review. If the Centers are to increase their active involvement in helping the plan-

ning function, they could use independent funding so their work doesn't add costs to already time-consuming and expensive studies.

Another point not addressed directly by General Riley's memo is the lack of emphasis the House Appropriations Committee placed on funding Corps planning in FY '06.

Whether that will continue for FY '07 will be known tomorrow (May 16th) when the committee acts on its appropriations bill for the Corps.

Last year, the House took the position that dollars should be put into constructing authorized projects first, with planning funding to come once these projects were completed. Some fear that approach would result in the very kind of draconian measures General Riley seeks to avoid. If there is a shortage of planning, they say, not only will experienced planners be lost but so will any vestige of a water resources program that anticipates needs for new projects and repairs and modifications of existing projects.



The beach renourishment project at Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina was recently completed after months of preparation and concerns about federal funding.

Pictured at left is Kim Segal from Marlowe & Company touring the beach with Bob Simpson, Town Manager of Wrightsville Beach; Mayor Robert O'Quinn; and Rick Catlin, Chairman of the New Hanover County (NC) Ports, Waterway, and Beach Commission.

[www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com](http://www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com)

## FEMA Restructuring Plans Set to Move Forward in Congress

Homeland Security Committee Chairman Susan Collins (R-ME) and Ranking Committee Member Joe Lieberman (D-CT) held a press conference last week to stress the importance of keeping FEMA or the proposed National Preparedness Response Authority within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Collins and Lieberman were joined by several Members of the House of Representatives.

The Members spoke about the importance of bringing preparedness functions back into FEMA and keeping FEMA part of the Department of Homeland Security. House members announced legislation that is similar to some of the recommendations made in the Senate Homeland Security Hurricane Katrina report entitled, "Hurricane Katrina: A Nation Still Unprepared."

"Members of both parties from both houses of Congress agree on two points about the future of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. First, we agree that FEMA's woefully inadequate performance to Hurricane Katrina and to other disasters requires that it be strengthened, given new authorities, stature, and leadership. We also agree that calls to remove FEMA from the Department of Homeland Security are mistaken. Our extensive report concluded that FEMA has never been prepared for a catastrophe the scale of Katrina. The evidence we developed overwhelmingly supports this conclusion," said Collins.

Lieberman stated, "It is a powerful

statement that a bipartisan, bicameral group of us agree FEMA needs to be rebuilt into a more powerful, better-managed, better integrated organization to prepare for, respond to, and help people and communities recover from both natural disasters and terrorist attacks. We also concur that, no matter what you call it, this more muscular organization must be the core of the Department of Homeland Security - as FEMA was originally intended to be and as the Hart-Rudman Commission had envisioned it."

***"...with hurricane season now just a month away, we don't have time to do a lot of dilly-dallying."***

***Rep. Bob Etheridge (D-NC)***

Rep. Bob Etheridge (D-NC) said, "You know, with hurricane season now just a month away, we don't have time to do a lot of dilly-dallying. We've got to move on and get the job done. It's going to come. We won't be able to stop the next hurricane from landing; we certainly can take steps to reduce the number of lives lost and the amount of property that's lost."

Speaking about the impact that Hurricane Rita had on his home state of Texas last year, Rep. Michael McCaul (R-TX) noted, "...the biggest complaint I got was that FEMA was not around. Nobody knew where FEMA was. Nobody

knew who to contact. Business cards were exchanged after the hurricane. And most importantly, when they did find them, they were not empowered to make decisions on the ground."

The Senate Homeland Security Committee recently adopted findings and recommendations developed by Collins and Lieberman aimed at ensuring that the Nation is better prepared in the event of another catastrophe on the scale of Hurricane Katrina.

The 86 Committee-approved recommendations include reorganizing the federal emergency management structure that would strengthen and give new authorities, stature and leadership to a new agency entitled the National Preparedness Response Authority under the umbrella of DHS.

According to Lieberman, FEMA is reportedly implementing about "three fourths" of the recommendations. However, in order to implement structural changes to FEMA's organization, the senator believes that legislation will need to be approved by Congress.

Reform legislation is expected to be considered by the House and Senate sometime this spring.

In addition, issues related to restructuring the federal government's emergency response system are expected to be brought up during the nomination process for R. David Paulison, the president's choice to head FEMA.

Hearings are slated to begin in the Senate within the next two weeks on the Paulison nomination.

## Offshore Drilling Debate Heats Up in House

On Wednesday, May 10th, the House Appropriations Committee approved an amendment to the Fiscal Year 2007 Interior and Environment spending bill to lift the statutory natural gas ban that covers from three to 200 miles out, encompassing the entire Outer Continental Shelf. A press release from Rep. John Peterson (R-PA), who sponsored the amendment, stated that the vote on the provision marks a “seismic shift in the nation’s decade-old debate over energy policy” and that the Congressman is looking forward to debating the issue on the floor of the House of Representatives.

The amendment passed by a wide margin of 37-25, surprising many people and potentially yielding momentum for amendment supporters heading into next week’s consideration by the full House. The House defeated a similar measure last year by a measure of 262-157 and many speculate that the Peterson camp will be unable to overcome that much opposition, even with a renewed focus on energy issues.

In order to avoid a politically-charged debate on the House floor, House leaders may try to remove the provision in the House Rules Committee this week.

The amendment itself would not automatically open the Outer Continental Shelf to new natural gas exploration.

The amendment does not give the Interior Department the necessary authorization to issue production leases. Appropriations bills are not supposed to include legislative language, a stand-alone measure would be required to grant the Interior Department that authority. The current authority allows the Department to issue production leases in the Gulf of Mexico and other federal waters not covered by the congressional and presidential offshore oil and gas bans.

Opposition to the measure is expected during the House debate and Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA) is expected to offer an amendment to remove the Peterson language and extend the current congressional ban on offshore drilling.

Several Members of Congress have spoken out against any efforts to expand oil and gas production in U.S. waters, including Rep. G.K. Butterfield (D-NC).

“Offshore drilling not only poses a terrible risk for North Carolina’s coastal communities, but it could also hinder our military’s preparedness,” Butterfield said.

He shares his concerns with the U.S. Navy, which has expressed concerns about expanded drilling off the Virginia coast because of the many hazards associated with training the Navy, Air Force, and Marines.

Butterfield said that one of his greatest concerns with offshore drilling is the potential damage that could be done to the coast in the event of an accident – even an accident that occurred off the shore of a neighboring state. “Even a small accident near our coast could potentially turn into a huge and lengthy disaster for North Carolina,” Butterfield said. “Our coastal communities are just too vital to our economy and character to be placed at risk.”

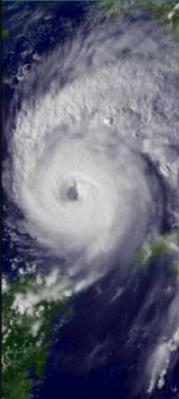
The American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) recently named the winners of its annual Top Restored Beach Awards.

Pictured to the right is Senator Tom Carper (D-DE) and Congressman Mike Castle (R-DE), along with several federal, state, and local officials celebrating the recognition for Rehoboth Beach and Dewey Beach in Delaware.



# National Hurricane Preparedness Week

May 21-27, 2006

HISTORY	HURRICANE HAZARDS		FORECAST	PREPARE	ACT	
						
<b>S</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>W</b>	<b>Th</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>S</b>
MAY 21	MAY 22	MAY 23	MAY 24	MAY 25	MAY 26	MAY 27
<b>Hurricane Basics</b> <b>Hurricane History</b>	<b>Storm Surge</b> <b>Marine Safety</b>	<b>High Winds</b> <b>Tornadoes</b>	<b>Inland Flooding</b>	<b>Forecast Process</b>	<b>Disaster Prevention</b>	<b>National Day of Family Preparedness</b>

[www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare](http://www.nhc.noaa.gov/prepare)

"Preparation through education is less costly than learning through tragedy."

- MAX MAYFIELD, DIRECTOR  
NATIONAL HURRICANE CENTER



**FEMA**