

Testimony of Anthony Pratt
American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA)
To the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
On America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018

May 9, 2018

I am Anthony Pratt representing the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) for which I serve as President. ASBPA, founded in 1926, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that advocates for healthy coastlines by promoting the integration of science, policies and actions that maintain, protect and enhance the coasts of America. From its formation, ASBPA has worked with Congress to help pass significant legislation that helps define and refine the strong, necessary role the federal government plays in the management and preservation of our nation's shorelines.

I want to thank Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper for their strong leadership in bringing this bill forward. It is encouraging to see Congress working so well across the aisle to address the Nation's water resources infrastructure challenges.

ASBPA is very pleased with the 5 year budget plan. When Member's Requests (earmarks) were eliminated transparency in the budget for water resources was lost. As a non-federal sponsor of Corps projects for many years it was a great benefit for me to know what was proposed in the Corps annual appropriation as the budget discussions went through Congress. The current process is a 'black box' in that Congress appropriates Corps funding and the Administration determines where projects will be done through the work plan without specific discussions on specific projects between Members and the Administration. As a local sponsor, in the world of Continuing Resolution budgets, it was extremely difficult to wait until mid-federal fiscal year to learn what projects are included in the work plan and to supply the required cost share funding on very short notice. It is likewise difficult for the Corps to follow a rigorous bidding process in such a short time frame. With a 5 year outlook for planned work greater efficiency and better partnering will occur. Projects can be better prepared for and non-federal sponsors will be better perched to have match funds available.

The Bill's incorporation of Integrated Water Resources Management is a modernization step that will improve service delivery to the Nation. Looking to align authorities, improve opportunities for information sharing, and supporting complementary and integrated solutions to water resources challenges among partners and stakeholders is a valuable step forward for both the Corps, its partners and project beneficiaries.

The required guidance to ensure that the 5 year budget and work plans take into consideration a full array of Corps' business lines to maximize the return on the federal investment is supported. This helps put natural infrastructure investments on par with gray infrastructure investments. As discussions continue this year on how to best address the Nation's infrastructure needs, the benefits to the nation

of maintaining natural infrastructure, particularly on the coast, are vital to include. Well managed and maintained beaches, dunes and wetlands are the first line of defense against storm waves and tidal surge. As I have stated in testimony to this committee previously, infrastructure refers to the structures, systems, and facilities serving the economy of an industry, country, or area, including the services and facilities necessary for its economy to function. Water and coastal infrastructure, just like man-made infrastructure, is about assets that society depends on – and, most particularly, it is about U.S. jobs. Creating jobs and protecting jobs, blue collar jobs and white collar jobs, American jobs that cannot be outsourced. Service industry at the coast is alive and well and abundantly serves the nation's economy. Investment in natural infrastructure through multi-business line investment secures that economic return for generations to come.

Another issue that has been a challenge in the past is how well informed the conversation on federal water resources investment has been. Our observation is that the benefit/cost analysis has not served the consideration of the return of federal investment at all well. Where the total costs of projects are accounted for there are many National benefits that are not included. This is a disservice to the Nation. We strongly advocate for a more informed b/c process that informs appropriators on the full return of National benefits on the investment made. The 5 year budget plan and the integrated water resources approach are a major step forward in the realization of this goal. We again thank you for the inclusion of these and look forward to future discussions with you on improving the benefits calculations. We are also very happy to see the call for the GAO study to examine possible BC calculation reforms. This is a wise course of action and very much needed.

By the fact that the EPW Committee remains committed to a biennial Water Resources Development Act the Corps' Civil Works budget remains on a forward looking tack and each subsequent WRDA provides opportunity to continue to build improvements and modernization of the Corps' Civil Works mission. The Corps strives to deliver service and projects to the Nation and depends on biennial WRDA's to address policy and procedures to improve delivery services and authorizations for needed work.

ASBPA is also appreciative of the inclusion of the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study. Combined with the North Atlantic Coast Comprehensive Study, the South Atlantic Coast Comprehensive Study, and coastal Louisiana and Texas studies much of the continental U.S coast will have comprehensive resiliency plans in place. This is an objective we strongly support.

The National Academy's study is endorsed. This study will take a broad view of the way in which the Nation's water resources development projects are delivered. ASBPA supports a fresh look at how the Corps functions and an examination of its structure with regard to how it can optimize efficiency, coordination, transparency and cost savings. We look forward in helping in any way possible in promoting and carrying out this National Academy study.

We add the thought that the NAS study take into consideration how the Administration views the Corps' mission and supports it through budget and policy. We strongly support an overview of how the Corps currently operates and if there are improvements that can be made to get projects completed as quickly and efficiently as possible they should be identified and pursued. ASBPA offers our assistance in any way you may find our expertise and experience with coastal water resources protection projects helpful in accomplishing your stated goals.