

Good afternoon Chairman Rouzer and Ranking Member Napolitano,

I am here today to respectfully request the inclusion of critical authorization language for my district in the 2024 Water Resources Development Act.

In September of 2023, heavy rainfall brought on by a nor'easter washed away significant sections of the Fire Island shoreline. The result was homes left precariously close to the water, boardwalks hanging freely in the air, and emergency vehicles being unable to traverse the eroded beaches. Coastal erosion on Fire Island has been a problem for decades and threatens critical infrastructure as well as private property. Just a few months ago, a power station on Fire Island was so close to the eroded coastline that emergency protective work had to be completed to prevent it from being compromised. In Seaview, their local utilities are also susceptible to flooding due to beach erosion, which is now threatening water wells.

In addition to serving as home for many of my constituents, Fire Island fulfills an important purpose as a barrier island which protects Long Island from erosion and storms.

The Army Corps of Engineers has determined that the weather event that caused this damage does not meet the requirements under PL 84-99 for emergency renourishment. Therefore, instead of engaging in emergency renourishment work, Army Corps will continue in accordance with the Fire Island Inlet to Montauk Point (FIMP) project schedule. With project renourishment set to take place every few years, we are left in limbo with respect to when that federal assistance can be provided between scheduled renourishment periods.

Each passing storm increases the damage to our shoreline. Just this Tuesday, the Town of Babylon notified my office that heavy rainfall had eroded their local beaches so badly that a playground and pavilion structure were close to being compromised. The day after, I was notified

the playground is now unusable and the water has made its way to the pavilion structure. Timely renourishment is necessary to prevent further deterioration. Our communities in Massapequa are similarly threatened by erosion. In the last two years, the Town of Oyster Bay has spent over \$3 million to purchase sand and rebuild Tobay Beach. Without this investment, Tobay would have been compromised as well.

The longer we leave these problems unchecked, the greater the probability that Long Island will require increased support for infrastructure resiliency projects. If we can address this problem quickly, we can avoid having to address even greater damage in the future.

To address this issue, I will be submitting proposed authorization language that would allow renourishment to occur following nor'easters affecting the Fire Island National Seashore and neighboring hamlets in between scheduled periods. My submission is based off a similar authorization that was included in the 2022 Water Resources Development Act for the State of Delaware.

The current situation on Fire Island has highlighted the need to create a mechanism for permitting supplemental work outside of the typical FIMP renourishment windows should similar damage occur in the future.

It is my hope that this year's WRDA can provide Long Island residents with the assistance they so desperately require. Thank you for the opportunity to highlight this incredibly important issue.