

**Outside Witness Testimony**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**  
**Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development**  
**Re: Army Corps of Engineers, Civil Works**

**Submitted by: Chad Berginnis, Executive Director**  
**Association of State Floodplain Managers**

**March 31, 2020**

The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) appreciates the opportunity to provide Outside Witness Testimony for the Committee’s record on the FY 2021 Energy and Water Development Appropriations legislation. The Association has almost 20,000 members, including members in 37 state chapters. Members are largely state and local officials, but many are the engineers, planners, and other professionals who support local communities’ efforts to reduce flood risk and to wisely manage floodplains and flood prone areas within their jurisdictions. Our membership also includes members of research and academic institutions, and the insurance and lending industries.

**Increase Funding for Corps of Engineers Technical Assistance.**

The Association of State Floodplain Managers (ASFPM) has long supported the technical assistance programs of the Army Corps of Engineers Civil Works Program. Corps of Engineers expertise in assisting communities to develop solutions to flood challenges can make major strides toward reducing flood losses – often without multi-million-dollar taxpayer investments in large Corps projects. The technical assistance programs include **Section 22 Planning**

Assistance to States (PAS), Flood Plain Management Services (FPMS) (Section 206, 1960 Flood Control Act (PL 86-645), as amended), National Flood Risk Management Program (NFRMP) and the Silver Jackets program. Appropriations for these programs are made through the Investigations – Remaining Items section of the Energy and Water Development Appropriations.

These programs represent a relatively small portion of the budget for the Army Corps of Engineers, yet have a significant return on investment. Many smaller jurisdictions that would never qualify for a major Corps project nor be able to afford the long term Operations and Maintenance costs for major projects, can develop smaller projects that can be non-structural, nature-based, or a combination of structural and non-structural measures. The Corps' Silver Jackets program has the added advantage of being able to bring together other programs from within the federal family as well as state and locally-based programs to assist in addressing flood-related challenges.

ASFPM members strongly urge that these technical assistance programs be funded at higher levels than in the past. The budget request for Fiscal Year 2021 includes \$5 million for Planning Assistance to States (PAS), \$15 million for Flood Plain Management Services (FPMS) and \$5 million for the National Flood Risk Management Program (NFRMP). The Silver Jackets funding is included in the funds for the NFRMP. We suggest funding PAS at \$15 million, FPMS at \$25 million, and \$10 million for NFRMP.

We strongly recommend expanding Corps engagement with such programs because of their great value in assisting states and communities to reduce their future losses due to flooding. Many communities across the nation are already experiencing and are anticipating increased flooding, erosion problems, and deteriorating water supplies from more frequent and intense rainfall events and coastal storms, rising sea levels, and increasing stormwater runoff and urban flooding from changing climate and land use changes in watersheds. To address these flooding problems, many communities need expert engineering, economic, environmental, and planning assistance to assess and help identify potential structural and/or non-structural solutions to their flooding problems. Many smaller communities cannot afford to maintain such expertise in their local governments on a permanent basis, and can benefit greatly from Corps of Engineers technical support. We note that only a few Corps Districts across the country have made use of these opportunities to bring Corps expertise to their communities outside of the context of major Corps construction projects. Thus, large numbers of communities do not have the advantage to tap Corps expertise and support where and when it is often most needed and would be helpful. We ask the Subcommittee to consider report language supporting current efforts at Corps Headquarters to educate Districts about these programs and to encourage their use.

**National Flood-related study provisions.** We would also urge the Subcommittee to provide **funding for two important WRDA-authorized studies.** The Corps' **Water Resources Priorities Study**, begun in 2016, but thus far not complete, will assess the Nation's flooding vulnerabilities across all regions of the U.S., and will analyze the effectiveness of programs, authorities,

policies, roles, and activities for flood damage and flood risk reduction. This unique study, originally authorized in WRDA 2007 (Section 2032) will provide Congress with a broad overview perspective of federal flood risk reduction programs and trends, including ways to potentially reduce costs by improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability of existing programs and strategies. We have clearly witnessed an enormous increase in the nation's flood disaster impacts and costs. Average annual costs have grown from approximately \$4 billion in the 1980's to \$17 billion (2010 – 2018), and FEMA has recently estimated that total average national flood damages have risen (2009 – 2019) to \$39.3 billion, including both hurricane and riverine impacts. Obviously, some years have witnessed damages far exceeding these levels. ASFPM believes that such a study is even more needed now than when it was first authorized.

In addition, for many of the same reasons, we would also urge the Committee to consider including funds for the Corps' **Review of Emergency Response Authorities** study, authorized in Section 3029(b) and (c) of WRDA 2014, including providing Congress and the public with required biennial reports on emergency repair and rehabilitation expenditures under the P.L. 84-99 program. We are concerned that there are many situations where federal taxpayers are repeatedly paying for the same levee and other flood control project repairs, and where improved flood damage reduction plans, such as voluntary buyout plans, identification of floodways, and levee setbacks and realignments that make room for increasingly large flood volumes being experienced, should be developed to reduce disaster costs and improve floodplain management and environmental management simultaneously. The study would be

an important starting point for Corps and Congress' review of ballooning costs and reducing public and private damages.

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](mailto:cberginnis@floods.org). National headquarters of the Association of State Floodplain Managers is located at 8301 Excelsior Drive, Madison, WI, 53717, 608-828-3000, [www.floods.org](http://www.floods.org).