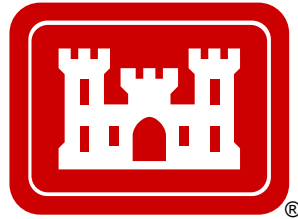


# NEW JERSEY BACK BAYS COASTAL STORM RISK MANAGEMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY

## Communications and Outreach Plan (CoOP)



US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS  
NATIONAL COASTAL PLANNING CENTER OF EXPERTISE FOR  
COASTAL STORM RISK MANAGEMENT  
and the  
PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT



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22 April 2019

# New Jersey Back Bays CSRM Study Communications and Outreach Plan

## Table of Contents

BACKGROUND.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	4
COMMUNICATION GOALS .....	4
PLAN OVERVIEW .....	5
INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS .....	6
PUBLIC OUTREACH AND FEEDBACK.....	9
STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION .....	10
KEY MESSAGES.....	13
CONTACT INFORMATION.....	14

## BACKGROUND

The New Jersey coastline is a complex and vulnerable system that provides substantial value to the nation. The New Jersey Back Bays (NJBB) Coastal Storm Risk Management (CSRM) Feasibility Study will identify critical data needs to develop and recommend a comprehensive strategy for improving preparedness and reducing coastal storm flood risk through structural and/or nonstructural measures. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) are working with local, state and Federal agencies as well as stakeholders to achieve a shared vision that will continue to support a vibrant economy, cultivate resilient communities and encourage a healthy ecosystem.

Hurricane Sandy impacted the New Jersey Coastline in October of 2012. In response to the storm, Congress passed PL 113-2 (The Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, of 2013). This act provided funds for the North Atlantic Comprehensive Study (NACCS) that was tasked with identifying coastal communities at risk from hurricane and storm damages. In support of this goal, the NACCS identified nine high risk areas on the Atlantic Coast for an in-depth feasibility level study based on preliminary analyses.

The NJBB CSRM Study is one of the high risk areas severely impacted by Hurricane Sandy that warrants an in-depth investigation into potential coastal storm risk management solutions. The study is evaluating alternatives, including the No Action Alternative, to determine if a recommendation in the Federal interest to manage the risk from coastal storm flooding can be made.

The NJBB CSRM study area is located landward of the New Jersey barrier islands of Monmouth, Ocean, Atlantic and Cape May Counties and includes the set of interconnected water bodies that are separated from the Atlantic Ocean. The non-Federal sponsor for this study is the NJDEP and the original \$3,000,000 feasibility study was initiated in April of 2016 with the signature of the Feasibility Costs Sharing Agreement between the NJDEP and the USACE. Given the complexities and scale of the study, subsequent cost sharing agreements have been signed that have increased the study costs based on the complexity of the study area and the level of work to make a recommendation for a CSRM project. Current time and cost estimates for completing this study are \$18,050,000 over a six-year period beginning in April of 2016. A study schedule is provided in Table 1 and the USACE and the NJDEP are scheduled to conclude the study in the form of a Chief of Engineers Report in April of 2022.

USACE will continue to work with NJDEP and others to develop a comprehensive characterization of the entire NJ bay coastline for the purpose of identifying Federal interest in examining the feasibility for recommendations for CSRM coastal storm damage risk management projects within the NJ Back bays.

Table 1: Study Milestones

<b>NJBB Study Milestones</b>	
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>6 Year Study Schedule</b>
<i>Feasibility Cost Sharing Agreement (FCSA)</i>	<i>Apr-16</i>
<i>Alternative Milestone Meeting</i>	<i>Dec-16</i>
<i>FCSA Amended</i>	<i>Jan-18</i>
<i>In Progress Review (IPR) Milestone</i>	<i>Dec-18</i>
<i>Interim Feasibility Report and Environmental Scoping Document</i>	<i>Mar-19</i>
<b>Tentatively Selected Plan Milestone</b>	Jan - 20
<b>Draft Report Release</b>	Mar - 20
<b>Agency Decision Milestone</b>	Jul-20
<b>Final Feasibility Report</b>	Nov- 21
<b>State and Agency Review</b>	Feb -22
<b>Chief of Engineers Report</b>	Apr-22

\* Items in italics have occurred.

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the USACE NJBB CSRМ Feasibility Study is to evaluate strategies to increase resilience and preparedness, and to reduce risk from future storms and the future impacts of sea level change (SLC). The objective of the NJBB CSRМ Feasibility Study is to investigate CSRМ problems and solutions to reduce damages from coastal flooding affecting communities, critical infrastructure, critical facilities, property, and ecosystems.

The end product of this study will be a comprehensive CSRМ Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement for the NJBB developed amongst the USACE Vertical Team, decision makers, elected officials and coastal community stakeholders. With this approach, the NJBB study will align with broader climate change preparedness and adaptation, community resilience planning, and sustainability principles coupled with the ongoing systems approach to geomorphic engineering practices currently being incorporated into USACE Civil Works planning processes.

## COMMUNICATION GOALS

The Communication Goals of the NJBB Study are summarized by seven succinct messages.

1. Provide timely and accurate information about the study
2. Socialize and communicate the potential coastal storm risk management measures designed to increase safety and reduce storm damage and associated risk and uncertainty
3. Inform and educate the public and local officials about potential long-term resolutions, including findings of the NJBB Study
4. Provide timely and relevant information to targeted audiences that demonstrates the USACE is a partner with the expertise and commitment to continuing to protect residents along the NJ coast
5. Elicit internal/external feedback throughout the study period
6. Build relationships, promote transparency, understanding, commitment and action to encourage community participation
7. Be honest, transparent, effective and professional

Throughout this study, the Project Delivery Team (PDT) and Communication Team will communicate with the public in a transparent manner, providing maximum disclosure with minimal delay. The Communication Team will use illustrative language to address the important points and provide the public with an understanding of the importance of the NJBB CSRM Feasibility Study.

To reach these goals, the Communication Team will abide by the following guidelines.

- Engage in meaningful collaboration with stakeholders and communities through partnering and communication, face to face meetings, webinars, email inquiries and videos
- Increase situational awareness of the NJBB CSRM project's goals and economic impact
- Share information about how the PDT is using the best available scientific information to make sound recommendations
- Actively communicate information about the study schedule and findings
- Proactively lead public dialogue about the USACE and NJDEP coastal mission
- Reduce misconceptions, misinformation or distractions that could negatively impact efficiency or effectiveness

## PLAN OVERVIEW

The NJBB CSRM Feasibility Study Communications and Outreach Plan (CoOP) has been developed to coordinate with Federal agencies and state, local and tribal officials, academic institutions, private non-profit organizations and the international community to ensure the development of a shared vision for community coastal resilience in a systems context and to ensure consistency with other plans, projects and programs. The goal of this CoOP is to increase the opportunities for stakeholders to understand the purpose, outcomes, and technical products of the

NJBB Study. Events include USACE-facilitated workshops, NEPA coordination meetings and webinars on key study topics.

This CoOP outlines the communication goals and approach, stakeholders, outreach efforts with overview, and a summary of key outreach efforts. NJBB CSRМ Feasibility Study reading material, talking points, and FAQs are included in Appendix A.

## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PROJECT COMMUNICATIONS

Target audiences can be divided into two groups:

1. Vertical Team stakeholders within USACE, NJDEP and the Back Bay Region Communities, the Planning Mentor and Risk Champion, Agency Technical Review and Independent External Peer Review teams, ad-hoc technical advisory committees and/or workgroups, and cooperating and participating Federal agencies and;
2. External stakeholders, including the public, elected officials, media outlets, civic leaders, and businesses, as well as Federal, state, and local regulatory agencies.

**1. Internal Communications Plan:** Due to the large study scope, the Assistant Secretary of the Army – Civil Works (ASA-CW) recommended that the NJBB CSRМ Feasibility Study develop reporting and communications requirements in his recent October of 2018 exemption approval memorandum. For internal communications the project development team and the Vertical Team are proposing the development of a Risk Panel, creations of a new Supplemental Governance Structure, and the continuation of the internal Focus Area Meetings.

**Risk Panels** - With direction and oversight provided by its higher headquarters, the USACE Philadelphia District will conduct a Risk Panel within 30 days of the receipt of comments of both the Draft Interim Report and the Draft Feasibility Report. These reports are scheduled to be released for public review and Agency Technical Review in March of 2019 and March of 2020, respectively. A public meeting or webinar will be held to present the content of each Draft Report and its role in the study process. The contents of the public meeting as with all public meetings and webinars will be archived on the study web portal. There will be 30 days to review the Draft Interim Report and 45 days to review the Draft Feasibility Report and each report will be posted online for the general public to download. The Risk Panel will meet after the receipt of comments on the draft report(s) to discuss how the study will move forward with the feasibility analysis to the development and release of the Final Feasibility Report in November 2021. The Risk Panel will focus on identification and analysis of significant study risks, the plan to respond to those risks, and methods that will be employed to manage/control those risks. For the panel, the study team will provide substantial detail on the strategy to identify a Tentatively Selected Plan and will analyze potential reductions in scope, schedule, and budget for the remainder of the study. The panel will include all pertinent members of the Vertical Team.

**Supplemental Governance Structure** - The USACE Philadelphia District will immediately implement a 3-tier supplemental governance utilizing the template in the Coastal NJ Protection and Restoration Feasibility Study, Addendum to Project Management Plan dated 06 January 2016.

This governance structure will facilitate conflict resolution and ensure successful partnering at all levels of the organizations. The following three tiers will be responsible for project oversight and ensuring successful project execution.

***Tier 1: The Executive Leadership Team:*** Tier 1 Members are responsible for executive level coordination to ensure resource availability and project execution. The Chair will ensure distribution of the quarterly updates or other important materials to appropriate team members. Meetings will occur as scheduled by the chair.

***Tier 2: The Business Process Assurance Team:*** Members are responsible for engaging at the senior district and PCX level (GS-15) and assuring that appropriate business processes are employed. The Chair will ensure distribution of the quarterly updates or other important materials to appropriate team members. Meetings will be as scheduled by the chair.

***Tier 3: The Active Management Team:*** Members are responsible for engaging at the middle management level providing direct project oversight to assist with project implementation and to inform Tier 1 and 2 decision makers. The Chair will ensure distribution of the monthly meeting brief, quarterly updates, or other important materials to appropriate team members. Meetings will be held at least monthly after district Project Review Board and as scheduled by the chair.

**Focus Area Evaluation (FAE) meetings** – These meetings will be organized by the USACE North Atlantic Division in Brooklyn, New York and will include the HQUSACE Regional Integration Team, the Policy Review Team, USACE North Atlantic Division staff, and the PDT. Meetings will be held quarterly or before critical project decisions, whichever is appropriate, and will detail recent plan evaluation results, decisions to be made, schedule and budget performance, and 6 month projection of activities. Currently these meetings are held bi-weekly (every two weeks) with Philadelphia District, USACE North Atlantic Division staff and the HQ RIT.

**Senior Executive Accountability** – This leader is accountable to the Director of Civil Works for project/program success. He will provide guidance and mentoring to the PDT. The Senior Executive will provide written quarterly updates and a briefing by the Deputy District Engineer will be provided to the USACE North Atlantic Division Programs Director that detail the following:

1. Graphical depiction of the project baseline;
2. Financial data indicating the status of funds obligated, expended, and anticipated;
3. A summary level update report on any outstanding issues identified;
4. An over-arching roll-up of the above items at the program level; and,
5. A projected look at upcoming milestones, significant developments, outreach events, and FAE meetings.

**Project Delivery Team (PDT):** An enterprise solution to staffing the study has been employed. Team members currently include experts from the USACE Philadelphia and New York Districts, the USACE Engineering Research and Development Center, and an Architecture/Engineering firm. In addition to PDT members, advisors from across USACE have been engaged to ensure the highest level of technical quality. Team members from the NACCS team have been engaged to help scope this complex and large scale regional study. Staff from the USACE Coastal Storm Risk Management Community of Practice, the Climate Community of Practice and the Cost Engineering Center of Expertise are engaged in the Study to review and critique methods and application. While this project may be managed from within North Atlantic Division, the PDT is truly an enterprise service made up of the best and brightest from USACE and the private sector.

PDT meetings are held on a weekly basis, with issue-specific ad-hoc meetings held more frequently. Face-to-face meetings, phone calls, teleconferences, webinars, video chats, and emails are employed to facilitate PDT communication.

**2. External Communications Plan:** External communications with the public will be maintained through direct interaction at public meetings, maintaining a robust website and a mailing list to distribute project updates, upcoming milestones and upcoming public events to people who have signed up to receive these communications.

**Communications and Outreach Plan (CoOP):** As part of the CoOP (included herein), the Philadelphia District has developed and maintained an, public website that details study progress, communication opportunities, and solicitation of feedback. Stakeholder, Congressional, and public outreach opportunities will be delineated and dates for future meetings will be established. This document will serve as the CoOP for the NJBB Feasibility Study.

## **Methods & Tools**

### **Public Meetings**

Face-to-face meetings are necessary to meet communication objectives. Public meetings are held periodically. The PDT works with elected officials and stakeholder groups to advertise meetings. A list of previously held public meeting is provided in Table 2. In addition, videos of previous public meetings have been posted on the study webpage for those who were unable to attend in person

### **News Releases**

The PDT writes and disseminates news releases and media advisories to targeted media outlets. USACE leadership will continue to discuss the study via radio and television interviews on programs whose audience demographics align with target audiences. News releases will be sent prior to public meetings and the release of publicly- available reports.



## **Emails**

The PDT has set up an email distribution list with over 500 email addresses for elected officials, regulatory agencies, stakeholder groups, and residents.

## **Study Webpage**

The PDT has launched a dedicated webpage with a simple, visually-compelling layout that provides quick access to study updates, fact sheets, reports, maps, public comment forms, a project fact card and a project fact sheet, past presentations and poster boards, and other online resources. In addition, videos of previous public meetings have been posted for those who were unable to attend in person. The website is located at:

<https://www.nap.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/New-Jersey-Back-Bays-Coastal-Storm-Risk-Management/>

## **Study Email Address**

The PDT has set up the study email address [PDPA-NAP@USACE.ARMY.MIL](mailto:PDPA-NAP@USACE.ARMY.MIL) to receive emails from the public.

## **Small Group Meetings**

The PDT has met with residents in small group meetings to learn about hyper-local problems and opportunities. Generally, the project planner, project manager, and/or coastal engineer will be toured through neighborhoods by residents and community groups. The PDT remains available to meet in such a way.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH AND FEEDBACK**

Communication is critical to study success and the team wants to communicate study goals and objectives, study schedule and findings to date to the public, and also wants the public to be able to voice their concerns to us. That is why all public meetings have had a Public Comment form printed out and available to return to the meeting organizers as well as a location on the Philadelphia District website where people can communicate their problems directly to a PDT member.

A series of public meeting will be held to share information and analyses associated with the release of the draft feasibility Report and Tentatively Selected Plan Milestone Meeting in the period from December 2019 to March 2020.

These forms are on the NJBB website below.

<https://www.nap.usace.army.mil/Portals/39/docs/Civil/NJBB/Public-Comment-Form-Sept-2018.pdf>

Summary of Past Public Outreach-

<https://www.nap.usace.army.mil/Portals/39/docs/Civil/NJBB/NJBB%20Public%20Outreach%20Summary.pdf>

## STAKEHOLDER COORDINATION

Coordination with stakeholders has been a critical component of the Study and the development of a regional vision for managing coastal storm risk. Table 2 documents the meetings, workshops, and charrettes that have taken place since the commencement of the study in April of 2016. Stakeholders, as presented below, include but are not limited to, citizens, elected municipal officials, federal agencies, state agencies, non-profit environmental organizations, local and regional planning commissions, and commercial and recreational interests.

### **Partner/Sponsor:**

Study Sponsor:

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection  
Division of Coastal Engineering  
1510 Hooper Avenue  
Toms River, NJ 08753  
PH: (732) 255-0770  
FX: (732) 255-0774

### **Cooperating Agencies:**

United State Army Corps of Engineers - USACE  
United States Environmental Protection Agency - USEPA  
United States Fish and Wildlife Service - USFWS  
National Marine Fisheries Service - NMFS

### **Stakeholders:**

Monmouth County	City of Cape May	City of Long Branch
Ocean County	Borough of Cape May Point	Borough of Manasquan
Atlantic County	Township of Dennis	Borough of Neptune City
Cape May County	Township of Lower	Township of Neptune
City of Absecon	Township of Middle	Township of Ocean
City of Atlantic City	City of North Wildwood	Borough of Sea Girt
City of Brigantine	City of Ocean City	Borough of Spring Lake
City of Corbin City	City of Sea Isle City	Bor. of Spring Lake Heights
City of Egg Harbor City	Borough of Stone Harbor	Township of Wall
Township of Egg Harbor	Township of Upper	Borough of West Long Branch
City of Estell Manor	Borough of West Cape May	Borough of Barnegat Light
Township of Galloway	Borough of West Wildwood	Township of Barnegat
Township of Hamilton	City of Wildwood	Borough of Bay Head
City of Linwood	Borough of Wildwood Crest	Borough of Beach Haven

Borough of Longport	Borough of Woodbine	Borough of Beachwood
City of Margate City	Borough of Allenhurst	Borough of Barnegat Light
Township of Mullica	City of Asbury Park	Township of Barnegat
City of Northfield	Borough of Avon-by-the-Sea	Borough of Bay Head
City of Pleasantville	Borough of Belmar	Borough of Beach Haven
City of Port Republic	Borough of Bradley Beach	Borough of Beachwood
City of Somers Point	Borough of Brielle	Township of Berkeley
City of Ventnor City	Borough of Deal	Township of Brick
Township of Weymouth	Township of Howell	Township of Eagleswood
Township of Bass River	Borough of Interlaken	Borough of Harvey Cedars
Township of Washington	Borough of Lake Como	Borough of Island Heights
Borough of Avalon	Village of Loch Arbour	Township of Lacey
Township of Lakewood		
Borough of Lavallette		
Twp. of Little Egg Harbor		
Township of Long Beach		
Borough of Mantoloking		
Borough of Ocean Gate		
Township of Ocean		
Borough of Pine Beach		
Bor. of Point Pleasant Beach		
Borough of Point Pleasant		
Borough of Seaside Heights		
Borough of Seaside Park		
Borough of Ship Bottom		
Borough of South Toms Riv.		
Township of Stafford		
Borough of Surf City		
Township of Toms River		
Borough of Tuckerton		

A more complete list of stakeholders that also contains an email distribution list is maintained by the Public Affairs office and the Project Manager. This list contains over 500 contacts obtained at past public workshops/meetings listed in Table 2 and is and will be used to distribute mass mailings on upcoming project milestones, report releases, upcoming events and will not be provided as input to the COOP plan for privacy reasons.

Table 2: Stakeholder, Public and Agency Coordination Meetings

Session	Date	Description	Stakeholders
<b>Southern Counties Planning Workshop</b>	06/17/2016	Obtain feedback about Problems, Objectives, and Potential Measures within the NJBB CSRSM Study Area	Academia, Elected Officials, NGOs, Municipalities, Counties, State and Federal Agencies
<b>Northern Counties Planning Workshop</b>	06/21/2016		
<b>Public Meeting</b>	12/01/2016		
<b>USACE/NJDEP Partnering Meeting</b>	03/06/2018	NJBB Study overview with several NJDEP Divisions	USACE and NJDEP
<b>USACE &amp; NJDEP Outreach Meeting</b>	05/18/2018	Cape May County Municipal Outreach	Academia, Elected Officials, NGOs, Municipalities, Counties, State and Federal Agencies
<b>USACE &amp; NJDEP Outreach Meeting</b>	05/24/2018	Atlantic County Municipal Outreach	
<b>USACE &amp; NJDEP Outreach Meeting</b>	05/31/2018	Monmouth County Municipal Outreach	
<b>Interagency Regulatory Resource Meeting (#1)</b>	06/06/2018	NJBB Status Update and Perimeter Plan Focus	State and Federal Agencies
<b>USACE &amp; NJDEP Outreach Meeting</b>	06/19/2018	Ocean County Municipal Outreach	Academia, Elected Officials, NGOs, Municipalities, Counties, State and Federal Agencies
<b>Southern Counties Public Meeting</b>	09/12/2018	Update citizens about Problems, Objectives, and Potential Measures within the NJBB CSRSM Study Area	Academia, Elected Officials, NGOs, Municipalities, Counties, State, Federal Agencies and Media
<b>Northern Counties Public Meeting</b>	09/13/2018		
<b>USACE Outreach Meeting</b>	11/13/2018	Barnegat Bay Estuary Program	Academia, NGOs, State and Federal Agencies
<b>Interagency Regulatory Resource Meeting (#2)</b>	11/29/2018	NJBB Status Update and Perimeter Plan Focus	State and Federal Agencies
<b>Public Webinar</b>	3/14/2019	Draft Interim Report Overview	Academia, Elected Officials, NGOs, Municipalities, Counties, State, Federal Agencies and Media

A variety of stakeholders have been identified that will be interested in the conduct of the NJBB Study. These groups include:

- Federal and State Agencies
- Regional entities and non-governmental agencies
- Tribes
- Academia
- Communities affected by Hurricane Sandy (including local governments and community groups)
- Congressional and Political Leaders
- Media

Federal agency stakeholders include USACE (Institute of Water Resources, Engineering Research and Development Center, Sliver Jackets), FEMA, USGS, NOAA (NWS and NMFS), USDOJ, USDA/NRCS, HUD, BOEM, NASA, SBA, USFWS, USEPA, and NPS. State agency stakeholders include NJDEP, NJDOT, NJOEM, NJ Department of Community Affairs (CDBG), NJSHPO and NJFWS. Private Non-Profit organizations include TNC, NFWF, Barnegat Bay Partnership, Rockefeller Foundation, Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve, NJ Adapt, American Littoral Society, Sustainable Jersey, and the Trust for Public Lands. Future stakeholder meetings will be coordinated around the TSP milestone, the release of the draft report and the release of the final report.

Future coordination and outreach for the NJBB CSRM Feasibility Study will include:

- Two public meetings with the general public, and regional stakeholders associated with the release of the Draft Feasibility Report to discuss the findings/progress of the study to date;
- Environmental agency coordination meetings to be held on a monthly basis;
- Cooperating agency meetings to be held on a quarterly basis;
- Environmental Conceptual Model meeting with resource agencies to be held in May 2019 and;
- Regular updates to the NJBB web portal.

## KEY MESSAGES

The key messages associated with this NJBB Communications and Outreach Plan include the following.

- USACE and NJDEP contribute to the safety, economic success and quality of life of local communities along the NJ coast by supporting flood risk management and coastal storm risk management initiatives to reduce the risk of loss of life, reduce long-term economic damages to the public and private sector, and improve the natural environment.
- USACE and NJDEP have launched a study that will help develop a comprehensive characterization of the entire NJ coast and examine the feasibility for recommendations of coastal storm damage risk management and ecosystem restoration projects coast wide.

- USACE and NJDEP will collaborate with others who are working on similar studies within the region
- Partnering between state and Federal members will best identify avenues to engage key counties and cities in the coastal NJ region and partnering opportunities that address coastal storm risk management and ecosystem restoration.
- Partnering engagements promote shared objectives for managing NJ coastal priorities on current and future potential partnered studies and projects.
- USACE offers a variety of Federal programs to assist the public with the preparation of comprehensive plans for the development, use and conservation of water and related land resources along the NJ coast. These programs are either available on a 50 percent federal/50 percent non-federal cost-shared basis, such as under the General Investigations and Planning Assistance to States Programs, or offered at full Federal expense, such as under the Floodplain Management Services Program.
- The PDT is working with local, state and Federal agencies to achieve a shared vision that will continue to support a vibrant economy, cultivate a resilient community and encourage a healthy ecosystem.
- The PDT will openly discuss challenges and share success stories that will help us build awareness of this much needed study while actively identifying barriers that could hinder our progress.
- Environmental restoration opportunities are maximized through CSR and NNBF opportunities including wetlands as part of the district's projects.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### **Media Query Guidance:**

All media inquiries should be directed to USACE Philadelphia District Public Affairs Office.

**Attention: Stephen Rochette**  
**Philadelphia District, Public Affairs**  
**100 Penn Square E.**  
**Philadelphia, PA 19107**  
**215-656-6432**

## APPENDIX A. KEY MESSAGES AND FAQs

### NEW JERSEY BACK BAYS COASTAL STORM RISK MANAGEMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY

**1) Study Purpose & Problem** - Historic storms have severely impacted the Back Bay communities of coastal New Jersey. The study area includes nearly 3,500 miles of shoreline with more than 180,000 structures, many of which are vulnerable to flooding and impacts associated with sea level change. USACE is committed to studying potential solutions to this complex problem in New Jersey.

**2) Managing Risk:** No coastal storm risk management project can eliminate the risk of flooding. The study is looking at measures that can cost-effectively *reduce* the risk of damages from coastal flooding that affects population, critical infrastructure, critical facilities, property, and ecosystems.

**3) Difficult Choices and Shared Responsibility:** Managing flood risk in the New Jersey Back Bays Study area is a highly complicated endeavor from an economic, environmental and engineering standpoint. It will require difficult choices and involve all levels of government and society at large.

**4) Collaboration, Environmental & Future Process:** The study is being conducted in collaboration with Federal agencies, the state of New Jersey, local government, non-profit organizations, academia and other stakeholders to ensure the development of a shared vision of coastal resilience and consistency with other plans, projects and programs. Specific emphasis will be placed upon the environmental analyses and will be communicated through various avenues through the NEPA process.

## **Common Questions:**

### **Why does it take so long to study and construct one of these projects?**

Simply put, studying and constructing large-scale projects takes time. There's a detailed process in place to make sure projects are done in accordance with the law. With a feasibility study, we're looking at a general problem and answering the question of whether we can implement a solution that is economically justified, environmentally acceptable, and technically sound. Specifically, the geographic scope of this study is large and the problem is complex, requiring significant data gathering, detailed analyses, and coordination with other government agencies.

## **STUDY OVERVIEW AND GENERAL QUESTIONS**

### **Q: Why didn't you look at this earlier? Everyone has known this is THE problem in coastal New Jersey.**

It's important to note that U.S. Army Corps of Engineers studies are developed in partnership with non-Federal entities (primarily state and local government) and at the direction of Congress (with the need for authorization and funding to initiate a study). The problem was further demonstrated with devastating flooding impacts associated with Hurricane Sandy and the development of the North Atlantic Coast Comprehensive Study in January 2015.

### **Q: What does this prove/demonstrate about the USACE beachfill program?**

The dune and berm systems along the New Jersey Shore reduce the risk of storm damages primarily from erosion, wave attack and inundation during storm events. Bay flooding is a different problem – one where storm surge is pushed through coastal inlets, raising the water surface elevations of the bays, which floods homes, businesses and infrastructure. The dune and beachfill projects mitigate against breaching and overwash, which can exacerbate bay flooding. This occurred at Mantoloking during Hurricane Sandy. Ultimately, the solution on the oceanfront is more straightforward from a technical standpoint. Simply put, these are different problems with different solutions.

### **Q: Is this a sure thing to happen?**

A: No, if it is determined that alternative plans or the selected plan does not meet USACE planning criteria or are environmentally or economically unacceptable, the study can be terminated.



**Q. What if the public, interested stakeholders and/or resource agencies are opposed to the plan with the highest economic benefits to the nation?**

USACE is required to identify the plan with the highest net benefits to the Nation (National Economic Development – NED Plan); however, the non-Federal sponsor may direct the USACE to recommend a Locally Preferred Plan (LPP). A LPP is a deviation from the NED Plan that can be requested by the non-Federal sponsor and approved by the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works (ASA - CW). If the LPP is smaller in scope, it must not only have positive net benefits (i.e a positive benefit/cost ratio), but also must have greater net benefits than smaller scale plans. If the sponsor prefers a LPP that is more costly than the NED Plan and the increased scope of the plan is not sufficient to warrant full Federal participation, the ASA - CW may grant an exception as long as the sponsor pays the difference in cost between the NED and the LPP. In this case, the LPP must have outputs similar in kind, and equal to or greater than the outputs of the NED Plan.

**Q: What if nothing comes out of this study? Is it a waste of money?**

If nothing comes out of the study in the near-term, that does not mean something won't come out of the study in the future. Future storms could change priorities and the funding mechanisms at the Federal and state level. Back bay flooding remains a significant problem in New Jersey so it's important for us to study and analyze potential solutions. The final plan will likely include an array of measures and recommendations that can be implemented incrementally at different scales and various levels (Federal, state, and local). Additionally, the study team is conducting modeling and economic analyses that will remain useful tools in the future.

**Q: Why is this important?**

A: Historic storms, including Hurricane Sandy, have severely impacted the Back Bay communities of coastal New Jersey. The study area includes more than 182,000 structures, many of which are vulnerable to flooding and impacts associated with sea level change.

**Q: Can I still submit a comment?**

Yes, the study is ongoing and comments will be a made a part of the record and taken into account. We will also have formal comment periods on the draft feasibility report in the future as part of the formal National Environmental Policy Act process.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL, NON-STRUCTURAL AND NNBF:**

**Q: Can you give examples of what "Possible nonstructural measures" and "Possible natural and nature-based features" are?**

A: Natural and Nature-based features include measures like living shorelines, tidal marshes, vegetated dunes, and oyster reefs. Nonstructural features are structure elevation, acquisition, wet, and dry flood proofing.

**Q: For nonstructural elevation and acquisition measures – is USACE and/or the state going to pay for certain homes to be elevated?**

A: If the final plan includes non-structural elevation and acquisition, then construction of that alternative would be cost-shared by the Federal government and non-Federal/local sponsor. However, at this stage of the process, the implementation of such a recommendation has not been developed.

**Q: What are the environmental impacts of surge barriers?**

We're currently conducting modeling to better understand the impact surge barriers have on tidal flow. Impacts will be addressed in an Environmental Impact Statement and will involve extensive coordination with Federal and state resource agencies (including National Marine Fisheries Service, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service). Additionally, it should be noted that there are significant environmental benefits associated with reducing flooding via surge barriers including reducing the risks to leaks of chemical/fuel/sewage and wastewater treatment facilities.

## **ENGINEERING**

**Q: Are there places in America with similar measures already in place? Other places in the world?**

A: All measures that have been identified in all the conceptual alternatives have been constructed successfully, quite often in ecologically sensitive areas and in recent years, both in this country and a number of other countries. Having said that, every estuary is unique so we do need to evaluate them for the specific features and resources of the New Jersey Back Bays area. There are storm surge barriers in Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Louisiana. Additionally, there are several studies ongoing now which are considering similar measures in Texas, Connecticut, New York, Maryland and Virginia.

**Q: How far above the waterline would the floodwalls or surge barriers reach?**

A. The height of seawalls as well as storm surge barrier gates depend heavily upon the specific design features of the seawall or the storm surge barrier gates and the location in which they are sited. While all seawalls would be above the waterline (based on the prior description), not all storm surge barrier gates are above the waterline during normal conditions.

**Q: Would a surge barrier limit the ability of the bay to drain during a storm?**

A. Under normal conditions no, but this is a significant design consideration for when the barriers might be closed. Storm surge barriers will most likely be built with associated pump stations that would address fluvial/riverine flooding that typically empties into the coastal estuary environment.

**Q: How would surge barriers allow the bay waters to reach the Atlantic?**

A. Generally, surge barriers are designed to have as minimal impact to existing flows during normal conditions as feasible. That being said, USACE is preliminarily evaluating the possible effects to daily tidal flows (as well as storm event conditions) related to the various alternatives that involve storm surge barriers.

**Q: Would these surge barriers restrict tidal flow?**

A. Storm surge barriers typically involve gate type mechanisms that allow for flow during normal conditions and that close during impending storm event conditions to prevent storm surges from entering the areas behind the barriers, whereas seawalls are structures that permanently block tidal flows. Detailed circulation and environmental impact modeling to assess tidal flow effects will be conducted after the Tentatively Selected Plan.

**Q: How would the U.S. Coast Guard, fishing and recreational vessels enter an inlet with a surge barrier?**

It's important to note that surge barriers would remain open for the vast majority of the time. If a surge barrier measure moves forward as part of this process, those issues would be addressed, but at this time we do not have detailed information to share about the logistical and operational components of a surge barrier.

**Q: Can you explain the perimeter based measures? Are these basically rings of levees around towns that face extreme flood-risk?**

A: When we refer to a “perimeter plan”, we are referencing floodwalls and levee type structures that would encircle developed portions of the Back Bay area.

**ECONOMICS & COSTS:**

**Q: How do you calculate a “Benefit to Cost” ratio?**

Preliminary estimated Benefit to Cost ratios have been developed based on the preliminary screening of estimated damages of structures and cost estimated based on a limited level design.

**Q: How is the study funded? How will construction be funded?**

A. This study is funded 50% by the Federal government with Energy and Water appropriations made to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The other 50% is funded by the non-Federal study sponsor, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection. Construction would be Federally funded through Energy and Water Appropriations by Congress. Construction would also involve a “non-Federal” cost share.