

RISE TO RESILIENCE

OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR FUTURE

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RISE TO RESILIENCE APPLAUDS PASSAGE OF THE WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2020

Congress passes significant environmental restoration funding and expansion of U.S. Army Corps coastal risk studies to better address sea level rise and community needs; major climate victory for the region

Today, the Rise to Resilience coalition applauds full passage of the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 (WRDA) by the Senate with bipartisan support as part of the larger Covid-19 relief and appropriations package. Including WRDA in the package marks a major win for Congress and the coalition in its fight to build resilience to climate change in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan region.

The legislation, authorizing \$9.9 billion in federal funds for 46 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) flood control, environmental restoration, coastal protection, and other projects, will bring jobs, coastal risk reduction, and nature's benefits to the metropolitan region at a time when a resilient recovery is needed more than ever.

"The passage of WRDA is a big step forward for the region's efforts to get out in front of the threats posed by climate change. This legislation will guide the federal government towards more comprehensive and holistic climate solutions, incorporating a new focus on ecological restoration and a greater emphasis on community engagement. Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand as well as Representatives Sean Patrick Maloney, Adriano Espaillat, and Nydia Velázquez deserve sustained applause for their leadership and commitment to protecting New York and the nation from the catastrophic risks posed by climate change," said **Paul Gallay, Hudson Riverkeeper**.

"Sea level rise poses a grave and increasing risk to the communities, economies and environments of New York and New Jersey," said **Natalie Snider, Senior Director, Coastal Resilience, Environmental Defense Fund**. "With passage of WRDA, Congress has taken a big step to address comprehensive climate threats and to create a more resilient future. The New York-New Jersey congressional delegation deserves praise for advancing legislation that charts a more safe, equitable and prosperous future for the region."

"The passage of WRDA is a historic achievement that shows impressive progress in how the Army Corps will meet some of the greatest climate challenges we face as a nation," said **Cortney Worrall, President and CEO, Waterfront Alliance**. "Building our way out of flooding and ignoring key aspects of climate change is no longer tenable. This bill reflects that reality better than any previous, related legislation. It is because of the Rise to Resilience coalition, people, and advocates, especially those in the New York and New Jersey region, that this call for change was heard loud and clear by Congress. We thank the House and the Senate for their leadership."

Priorities secured successfully in the bill include:

- Reforms to Corps principles and requirements to better incorporate climate change, environmental justice, and environmental impacts.
- \$421 million for 621 acres of habitat restoration through authorization of the Hudson-Raritan Estuary Comprehensive Restoration Plan.
- Expanded authorization for the New York-New Jersey Harbor and Tributaries Study to better address sea level rise and engage communities, particularly communities of color, Tribes, and low-income communities.
- Direction for the Corps to revise existing planning guidance documents and regulations to consider sea level rise and inland flooding for all future flood mitigation projects and to ensure that they are based on the best available, peer-reviewed science and data.
- Increased ability to coordinate across agencies and levels of government, including the use of data developed by state and other agencies.
- Provisions to increase the use of natural approaches to flood resilience.

"I was proud to work tirelessly this year alongside New York's grassroots environmental coalitions, like Rise to Resilience, to preserve and improve New York's invaluable water resources through the Water Resources Development Act of 2020. Together, we got it done, cementing our progress and commitment towards building resilience to climate change by securing \$421 million for the Hudson-Raritan Estuary Comprehensive Restoration, expanding the New York-New Jersey Harbor and Tributaries Study to better address sea-level rise, and engage with low-income and communities of color, all while ensuring that climate change and environmental justice and impacts are now required to be at the core of these critical projects," **said Senator Schumer**. "I thank all of the grassroots organizations, including Riverkeeper, Environmental Defense Fund, Waterfront Alliance, Rise to Resilience, and many more whose advocacy helped me bring WRDA across the finish line and look forward to continuing this fight to better address New York's key environmental priorities for future generations to come."

"Throughout the year I have fought to secure important projects to protect New York's water resources in this year's Water Resources Development Act. I'm pleased that so many new projects have been authorized, including a key study to improve shoreline resiliency and flood protection along Lake Ontario, which has experienced repetitive flooding in recent years," **said Senator Gillibrand**, a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, which has jurisdiction over the Army Corps of Engineers. "These projects will make our state more resilient to the impacts of climate change and restore important ecosystems like the Hudson River Estuary and Jamaica Bay. I'm proud to have secured these critical provisions for our state in this bill and I will continue working until it is signed into law."

"It's our job to protect the Hudson River and our river communities – not just today, but for future generations of New Yorkers," said **Rep. Sean Patrick Maloney**. "I'm proud that bills and

provisions I authored and championed were included in the bipartisan Water Resources Development Act, including projects that will advance studies examining the impact of climate change on our region. I will continue to fight for more projects that respond to the threat of climate change, improve our water infrastructure, and protect our river communities and farmers.”

“The Senate passage of the Water Resources Development act is a reaffirmation of our commitment to preserving and improving upon our nation's water infrastructure. Through extensive studies and research projects, the WRDA will bolster our nation's economy,” said **Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez**. “This bill will invest in our ports and waterways, and protect our coastal communities against flooding. I was proud to secure new authorizations for NY restoration projects. And, together, we expanded the scope of the New York-New Jersey Harbor and Tributaries Study to better address sea level rise and engage environmental justice communities. The WRDA 2020 is a critical step in the right direction to combat our nation’s climate crisis, protect frontline communities, and preserve our vital water infrastructure.”

“Threats posed by climate change are having disproportionate impacts on our coastal communities, especially New York and New Jersey, and this bill serves as a monumental step forward towards more comprehensive and holistic climate solutions for our region and our constituents,” said **Congressman Adriano Espaillat (NY-13)**. “Countless coastal communities and economies are facing impending and irreparable harm, and it remains critical that we protect our precious water resources and environment. I thank the Rise to Resilience coalition for their fierce advocacy and dedication in advancing this measure, and I’m proud of the New York-New Jersey delegation for working together to advance legislation that fosters a new era of equitability, environmentalism, and prosperity for all.”

“The passage of our bipartisan bill is proof positive of the support for ecosystem restoration and flood management in our waterlogged North Jersey communities,” said **Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr.** “The Hudson-Raritan Ecosystem project will allow federal investment to restore marshland and habitat at two environmentally sensitive sites in our cherished Meadowlands. I have long worked assiduously with local officials to address dangerous flash flooding from the Peckman River that has caused major damage and loss of life. I commend Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill for joining our efforts to get the Peckman River flood project authorized and put an end to these flooding disasters. The House is focused on protecting communities like ours in North Jersey through forward-looking solutions that allow our communities to sufficiently manage major water events.”

“I applaud the passage of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which passed the House and the Senate last night as part of the omnibus.” said **Congressman Albio Sires**. “This legislation, which is renewed every 2 years, provides authority for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to carry out water resources development projects and studies. Passage of a new WRDA bill is good for New Jersey’s 8th District because it authorizes projects and studies that address port and harbor maintenance, improve our aging drinking water infrastructure, ecosystem restoration, and invest in our ports and inland waterways. The Corps also does important work to help mitigate the impacts of climate change on frontline communities, which is why I was proud to support the passage of this legislation in the House.”

“This WRDA reauthorization recognizes that catastrophic storms are not the only climate threat facing New York City. Sea level rise will impact millions of New Yorkers in the decades to come as chronic, ‘sunny day’ flooding becomes more widespread,” said **Jaimey Bavishi, Director of the NYC Mayor’s Office of Resiliency**. “The passage of this bill will strengthen regional

resiliency by equipping the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers with a new mandate to address chronic flooding, advance nature-based solutions, and strengthen their community engagement. This important achievement would not have been possible without the hard work of the New York Congressional delegation, and I thank them for their commitment to building a stronger and safer future.”

“The coastal community of those who have experienced the wrath of sea level rise by surviving Superstorm Sandy must also add our applause and thanks to those who are publicly congratulating Congress. We must also recognize and acknowledge the power of the community’s and advocate’s voices for their resounding message, which was heard even across Congressional aisles. A victory indeed! Now the real work begins,” said **Pamela Pettyjohn, President, Coney Island Beautification Project.**

“With our public lands and waterways at the forefront of the climate crisis, this bill reduces barriers to support more projects which include natural systems that will make our coastal national parks and surrounding communities more resilient” said **Lauren Cosgrove, Senior Program Manager for the National Parks Conservation Association.** “Many of these nature-based features will help improve water quality, absorb flood waters and protect important park wildlife habitat and vulnerable neighborhoods. Thanks to leadership from Congressman Maloney (NY-18), Army Corps’ projects will consider sea level rise and tidal flooding, in addition to storm surge, to protect New York City’s waterfront communities and national parks from extreme weather events and long-term impacts of climate change.”

"Passage of this bill is something of a holiday miracle," said **Rob Freudenberg, VP for Energy & Environment at Regional Plan Association.** "We're thrilled that our US Representatives and Senators have come together in a bi-partisan fashion to secure restoration dollars for our region's critical estuary habitat while laying the groundwork for a vastly improved study to determine how to comprehensively ensure our region's waterfront communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems can be made more resilient in the face of worsening climate impacts, like sea level rise."

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[Rise to Resilience](#) is a campaign and coalition of residents, leaders in business, labor community and justice, volunteer organizations, scientists, environmental advocates, and design professionals collectively calling on our federal, state, and local governments to make building climate resilience an urgent priority in 2020 and beyond. The Rise to Resilience campaign is spearheaded by the [Waterfront Alliance](#).