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FEMA's BRIC PROGRAM CANNED

The Trump administration announced this month that it had shut down the federal government's premier pre-disaster mitigation grant program, Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC). Calling the program "wasteful" and "politicized," FEMA announced it was ending the program and "canceling all BRIC applications from Fiscal Years 2020-2023. If grant funds have not been distributed to states, tribes, territories and local communities, funds will be immediately returned either to the Disaster Relief Fund or the U.S. Treasury."

The agency stated that this would save \$882 million in federally-appropriated funds. BRIC is one of the most notable casualties of the Administration's declared plan to undo as much as it can of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law passed by Congress in 2021. The law made \$1 billion available to the BRIC program over five years, of which only \$133 million has so far been awarded. Ironically, BRIC was established under the first Trump administration.

Opposition to the move came quickly from Democrats such as Representatives Carter and Fields, both Democrats of Louisiana. However, more recently, opposition has also come from that state's Senator, Bill Cassidy, as well as John Bresnahan of Pennsylvania, both Republicans. Cassidy stated "I want to put Americas first. That includes investing in infrastructure to protect families from the risk of flooding. We have a program to do that. It's called BRIC."

FUTURE OF FEMA IN DOUBT

President Trump has said that he wants to eliminate FEMA and shift disaster response to states, accusing the agency of political bias as well as being too bureaucratic and slow. To further that desire, he created a presidential council to assess the future of FEMA, co-chaired by the secretaries of the departments of Homeland Defense and Defense to advise him on “the existing ability of FEMA to capably and impartially address disasters” and make “recommended changes related to FEMA to best serve the national interest.”

Meanwhile, Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem said during a recent cabinet meeting that “We’re going to eliminate FEMA.” Complaints about FEMA being slow and overly bureaucratic in getting funds to homeowners who need to rebuild are nothing new. However, FEMA provides a host of post-disaster services that require more money than most states could afford. In addition, FEMA runs the National Flood Insurance Program that would have to find another home if FEMA were shut down. Any changes to FEMA’s missions would require the approval of Congress.

COASTAL ESTUARY AND COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT BILL INTRODUCED

A bipartisan group of House members led by Rep. Mike Levin (D-CA) has introduced legislation to reauthorize and expand the Coastal and Estuarine Lane Conservation program (CELCP). The bill, cosponsored by Rep. Brian Mast (R-FL), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR), Buddy Carter (R-GA), and Jen Kiggans (R-VA), would also require NOAA to work toward designating five new National Estuarine Research Reserves. The measure, H.R. 2786, titled the Resilient Coasts and Estuaries Act would revive funding for CELCP at \$60 million a year and expand eligibility of the program to non-governmental organizations. The bill faces an uphill battle, with expected Administration opposition.

FEDERAL GRANTS NEWS

The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is now reviewing federal agency grant announcements before they are posted. According to published reports, federal agency officials have been told that the grants.gov site has been under systems maintenance. They have been instructed to email their planned grant notices to an inbox at the Department of Health and Human Services that is being monitored by DOGE....A New York Times report claims the forthcoming coming Trump administration budget proposal will call for “the elimination of most of the work of the scientific research division at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.” The proposal, which would have to be approved by

Congress, would sharply curtail funding for NOAA's Oceanic and Atmospheric Research office.

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Coastal Legislative Update: In our March issue of WaterLog we noted the March 14th deadline for Congress to adopt a budget for the current fiscal year. The deadline was avoided by extending a bare bone resolution continuing agency funding for the remainder of the fiscal year. At press time, the House appropriations committee has started work on FY26 funding measures, while we expect President Trump to submit his budget recommendations within the next few days.

The Congressional Research Service has issued a new report explaining what the [Coastal Zone Management Act](#) does....We're tracking 81 bills affecting coastal communities so far, only one of which so far has been enacted into law. That was the bill keeping the federal government funded through the end of this fiscal year. A significant portion of the other bills have one thing in common: disaster. They deal with post-disaster consequences. Some of these have already passed the House of Representatives and are awaiting Senate consideration.

For example, [H.R.1491](#), sponsored by Rep. Greg Murphy (R-NC), makes the postponement of certain deadlines by reason of a natural disaster, significant fire, or terrorist or military action applicable to the limitation on the amount of a tax credit or refund. The bill also makes postponements into account for the purposes of tax collection notices.

Additional post-disaster relief would come from [H.R. 517](#) sponsored by Rep. David Kustoff (R-TN). Also approved by the House, his bill authorizes the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to postpone certain tax filing deadlines because of a state-declared disaster. [H.R. 153](#), sponsored by Rep. Mike Ezell (R-MS), requires each federal agency that makes disaster assistance available to an eligible recipient to make available to the public on a subpage within the website also awaits action by the Senate.

All bills that pass the House must go to a Senate committee where they will be considered and, if approved, go to the full Senate for debate and final action. For more information on how a bill becomes law, see [How Congress Works](#).

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