



## 2024 Priorities for Coastal Flood Resilience 1.27.2024

The [Coastal Flood Resilience Project](#) (CFRP) is a coalition of nonprofit organizations working for stronger national programs to prepare for more severe storm flooding and rising sea levels along the U.S. coast.

Over the past two years, CFRP has developed a [policy agenda](#) and 25 supporting white papers and comment letters. Although some of the actions CFRP has recommended have been fully or partially implemented, much more needs to be done to prepare the coast for more severe storms and rising seas. New scientific research points to increasing frequency and intensity of coastal storms and accelerated rates of sea level rise. Increased storm flooding and permanent inundation by rising seas continue to pose a risk to hundreds of communities, critical infrastructure assets, and ecosystems including beaches, marshes, and wetlands.

For 2024, the last year of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress and the last year of the presidential term, CFRP will focus on promoting action on policies that:

- significantly advance efforts to strengthen preparedness for more severe storms and rising seas; and
- can be developed and substantially implemented during 2024.

Based on these criteria, CFRP recommends the following actions as priorities for 2024:

- 1. Support Administration Work on Relocation Framework:** For many coastal communities, the best strategy for avoiding the growing risks of more severe storms and rising seas is to gradually relocate to higher ground. In the [Ocean Climate Action Plan](#), the administration committed to “Develop an approach for sharing government wide resources and information to support community-driven relocation effectively...” and to develop relocation pilot projects. (p. 101)

**CFRP will support and encourage administration efforts to coordinate government wide resources for effective community relocation and to implement relocation pilot projects.**

- 2. Fully Implement the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard (FFRMS):** The [FFRMS](#) provides government-wide guidelines for evaluation of flood risks to federal investments and significantly strengthens federal agency consideration of storm and sea level rise risks to projects in coastal areas. The “Climate Informed Science Approach” is an especially critical aspect of the FFRMS as it clearly recognizes sea level rise risks to proposed federal projects and investments.

Several agencies have developed regulations implementing the FFRMS, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development [proposed rule](#) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) [proposed rule](#), but other key agencies have not (e.g., the Army Corps of Engineers).

**CFRP will promote government-wide action to develop and implement regulations or other appropriate guidelines for the full and effective implementation of the FFRMS.**

- 3. Support Federal Agency Assessment of Flood Risk to Major, Critical Coastal Infrastructure:** Coastal flooding poses risks to the reliable operation of major, critical infrastructure including transportation, energy, and water treatment assets. Interruption of service from critical infrastructure can delay disaster recovery and inundation by rising seas can degrade the normal operation of society. There are no national assessments of potential loss of major, critical infrastructure assets to coastal storms and rising seas. In 2024, federal agencies should undertake assessment of the expected impacts and timing of infrastructure service interruptions due to more severe storms and rising seas that is sufficient to use as a foundation for more detailed response plans in future years.

**CFRP will encourage and support federal agency work to assess risks to major, critical infrastructure assets on which coastal communities depend during 2024.**

- 4. Encourage Prompt Action to Create Federal Sea Level Rise Website:** Federal agencies, including the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, FEMA, the environmental Protection Agency, and the Army Corps of Engineers, have developed helpful websites addressing the causes and consequences of rising sea levels along the U.S. coast. These sites, however, present different information about rising seas and are not well-coordinated. Coastal program managers, planners, and property owners would benefit from a better integrated presentation of sea level rise data and information. Recognizing this need, federal agencies are working to develop a website dedicated to sea level rise data and information but there is no commitment to launch the new site in 2024.

**CFRP will work with federal agencies to support and promote the design of a single federal website providing data and information of sea level rise and to launch a site in 2024.**

- 5. Support Army Corps of Engineers Promulgation and Implementation of Regulations Supporting *Water Resources Principles and Requirements*:** The newly updated [Principles and Requirements](#) for water resources projects apply to most federal agencies now. The Corps has [proposed](#) to develop regulations for implementing *Principles and Requirements* with respect to its projects. When finally promulgated, these regulations will substantially improve Corps decision-making for coastal projects.

**CFRP will encourage prompt action by the Army Corps to promulgate regulations in 2024 operationalizing the *Principles and Requirements* within its decision processes.**

- 6. Address Sea Level Rise in Coastal Flood Planning by Army Corps of Engineers:** Congress is likely to enact a 2024 update to the Water Resources Development Act and this legislation is an opportunity to make critically needed updates to standards for coastal flood protection plans developed by the Corps and to requirements for local funding to implement these projects. Congress is [seeking input](#) to the legislation.

Under current law, the Corps develops coastal flood protection plans accounting for the expected impacts of current storms and their greater reach due to future sea level rise but not the permanent inundation of communities that rising seas also deliver. The Corps pays most of the costs (i.e., 65 percent) to implement approved plans. Communities have the option of adding consideration of sea level rise flooding not due to storms but must pay full costs of that work during both planning and construction phases. Faced with already high project costs, most communities decline to ask the Corps to account for sea level rise inundation risks (i.e., flood impacts outside of temporary storm flooding). This narrow assessment of coastal flood risks leads to misjudgment of future flood impacts and design of projects appropriate for temporary flooding but ill-designed for permanent flooding resulting from sea level rise.

**CFRP will work with Congress and the Army Corps of Engineers to encourage inclusion in 2024 Water Resources Development Act of new authority for the Army Corps to pay the costs of a full assessment of future sea level rise impacts on coastal communities and to fund sea level rise aspects of proposed projects at the same 65 percent federal cost share rate that applies to storm flood features of a project plan.**

- 7. Encourage Administration Identification of Ecosystem Migration Pathways:** As coastal communities move to higher ground, it is essential that geographic space be provided for the landward migration of wetlands and beaches. In the [Ocean Climate Action Plan](#), the administration committed to “identify coastal ecosystem migration pathways to ensure persistence of critical habitats that support coastal fisheries and wildlife.” (p. 100).

**CFRP will support federal agency work with states, tribes and local governments to develop guidelines for mapping coastal ecosystem migration pathways nationally and encourage the prompt development of mapping products.**

- 8. Update Local Floodplain Ordinance Standards:** FEMA implements the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Communities participating in the NFIP are required to adopt local ordinances including measures to reduce flooding. In 2021, FEMA [requested input](#) on needed changes to national requirements for local ordinances and these new regulations could include new measures to significantly reduce coastal storm flooding and sea level rise inundation risks. Since 2021, FEMA has not published a proposed rule.

**CFRP will encourage FEMA to publish both a proposed and final rule to strengthen local floodplain ordinances in 2024.**

- 9. Promote Nature-Based Solutions and Living Shoreline Standards:** Nature-based practices to reduce coastal flooding, especially storm driven surges and precipitation, can be more cost-effective and environmentally friendly than structural alternatives (e.g., seawalls or bulkheads). In the [Ocean Climate Action Plan](#), the administration committed to several initiatives to promote nature-based solutions, including to “Plan and construct coastal storm risk reduction projects that meet community needs, employ best-available science, including nature-based solutions, and protect ecosystems.” (p. 99)

Recognizing the value of consistent application of nature-based practices such as “living shorelines,” the administration also committed in the *Ocean Climate Action Plan* to “developing standards for various forms of “living shorelines”. (p. 103)

**CFRP will work with federal agencies to promote full consideration of nature-based solutions in coastal flood resilience projects and to support cooperative efforts to develop design standards for living shorelines.**

- 10. Support Enactment of the National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategy Act:** The [National Climate Adaptation and Resilience Strategy Act \(NCARS\)](#) provides a national framework for federal government action to improve adaptation to a range of climate change risks, including more severe storms and rising seas. The legislation, introduced in the Senate and House of Representatives with bipartisan support, provides for a climate adaptation strategy and implementation plan, a Chief Resilience Officer position in the White House to lead the national climate adaptation effort, and establishment of up to five interagency resilience Working Groups.

**CFRP will work with members of Congress and other interested parties to advance and enact NCARS legislation in 2024.**