

Testimony of Rep. Don Beyer

June 22, 2021

Natural Resources Committee

Thank you Chair Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman for having this legislative hearing.

I am honored to be here today and always glad to be back with the Natural Resources Committee.

I just recently reintroduced the bipartisan National Ocean and Coastal Security Improvements Act that I worked on with former Congressman Rooney last Congress with my colleague Representative Mast this Congress.

The bill aims to improve the ability of coastal communities to become resilient.

Resilience is the ability to prepare and plan for, absorb, recover from, and more successfully adapt to adverse events such as extreme weather or long-term changing environmental conditions.

This bill is intended to reduce the vulnerability of coastal communities and infrastructure from the impacts of extreme weather events, climate hazards, and changing ocean conditions.

Currently, there is insufficient federal attention to the necessary coastal research, resiliency, conservation, and restoration work that coastal communities need.

This bill aims to meet those needs.

This bill improves on NOAA's existing National Coastal Resilience Fund with improved definitions, applies a formula for improved distribution for state block grants and the national competitive grant program, and clarifies specific projects that would be eligible for the Fund's grant programs, including things like technical assistance to help develop comprehensive resilience and mitigation plans as an eligible funding effort.

Eligible recipients include state, local, tribal and territorial government agencies and nonprofits who use these funds to increase the ability to prepare for and recover from a variety of coastal threats, including hurricanes, tsunamis, and sea level rise.

I have been working on improving our coastal resilience response and funding since my first years in Congress.

I live in Alexandria and I hear from constituents daily about nuisance flooding that has only gotten worse over time.

I have been working to address these concerns and build up the resources that can respond.

Unfortunately, resource needs greatly outpace the funding that has been historically available.

To competitively fund projects across the 35 coastal and Great Lakes states as well as territories, this bill also directs 30 percent of offshore wind revenues to the program.

It is critical that we protect our coastal communities and ecosystems and help them more effectively adapt and prepare for sea level rise and changing ocean conditions.

According to the 4<sup>th</sup> NCA, shoreline counties hold 49.4 million housing units, while homes and businesses worth at least \$1.4 trillion sit within about 1/8th mile of the coast.

Flooding from rising sea levels and storms is likely to destroy, or make unsuitable for use, billions of dollars of property by the middle of this century, with the Atlantic and Gulf coasts facing greater-than-average risk compared to other regions of the country

In 2018 alone, there were 14 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters in the United States, with a total cost of at least \$91 billion.

In the GAO's own words, federal investments in resilience to reduce fiscal exposures have been limited.

The cost of recent weather disasters has illustrated the need to plan for these risks and invest in resilience.

Investing in coastal resilience can reduce the need for far more costly steps in the decades to come.

This bill is intended to meet those funding needs and reduce the vulnerability of coastal communities and infrastructure from the impacts of extreme weather events, climate hazards, and changing ocean conditions.

Thank you for letting me be here with you today and I hope we can advance this bipartisan bill to help our coastal communities.