



**TO:** TOPSAIL ISLAND SHORELINE PROTECTION COMMISSION  
**FROM:** MIKE MCINTYRE  
**SUBJECT:** MARCH REPORT AND LEGISLATIVE UPDATE  
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This report and legislative update provides information on the following topics:

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  - President Trump's Address to a Joint Session of Congress
  - Congressman Rouzer and Senator Budd Reintroduce the Disaster Relief Fairness Act
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  - Trump Administration and DOGE Initiate Cutbacks Across the USACE
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### **Special Note of Sympathy for the Passing of Topsail Beach Mayor Morton Blanchard**

Ward and Smith and The Ferguson Group were saddened to hear of the passing of Topsail Beach Mayor Morton Blanchard on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. We extend our deepest condolences to Mayor Blanchard's family, friends, and colleagues. We will keep all who mourn his passing in our thoughts and prayers.

## **Washington News**

### **Congress Passes Funding Bill to Avert Government Shutdown**

President Donald Trump signed a continuing resolution (CR) funding bill to keep the government open for the remainder of the fiscal year (through September 30), allowing Republican lawmakers to shift focus to key border and tax legislation. The bill largely funds the federal government at enacted FY 2024 funding levels and extends various expiring programs and authorities. The legislation reduces non-defense discretionary spending by \$13 billion while increasing defense spending by \$6 billion, maintaining a total discretionary budget of nearly \$1.7 trillion. Notably, the year-long CR did not include funding for any of the 8,600 pending FY25 earmarks totaling \$15.9 billion.

The bill narrowly passed Congress with support from some Senate Democrats, including Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), despite opposition from others in the party who viewed it as an opportunity to challenge Trump's policies. Trump praised Schumer's role in securing the vote and signaled his next priority: extending and expanding his first-term tax cuts. His sweeping tax proposals (beyond extending existing tax cuts), currently a large part of the House budget resolution, include eliminating taxes on tipped wages, Social Security, and overtime pay, but may face resistance from fiscal conservatives within the GOP.

### **President Trump's Address to a Joint Session of Congress**

On March 4, 2025, President Donald Trump delivered a 1-hour and 40-minute address to a joint session of Congress, marking the longest such speech in recent history. He highlighted his administration's actions over the past six weeks, including the signing of nearly 100 executive orders, withdrawal from international agreements like the Paris Climate Accord and the World Health Organization, and plans to implement significant tariffs on imports from Mexico, Canada, and China starting April 2. The President also expressed his commitment to continuing efforts to make the federal government more efficient and cut wasteful spending and programs.

### **Congressman Rouzer and Senator Budd Reintroduce the Disaster Fairness Act**

Congressmen David Rouzer (R-NC) reintroduced the *Disaster Assistance Fairness Act* to ensure homeowners in condominiums, housing cooperatives, and homeowner associations receive FEMA assistance for shared property damage after disasters. Under current law, FEMA regulations often exclude these communities from federal disaster aid, increasing rebuilding costs for residents. The bill seeks to amend the *Stafford Disaster Relief Act* to include essential common elements like roofs, plumbing, and utilities under FEMA's assistance programs and allow debris removal from private roads. "Last year's hurricane season reminded us natural disasters do not discriminate among neighborhoods, location, or housing arrangements. No matter your living situation, every individual deserves the same access and support in recovery," said Congressman Rouzer. Senator Ted Budd (R-NC) introduced companion legislation in the Senate, continuing past efforts to ensure equal access to disaster relief.

### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Solicits Feedback on the Implementation of WRDA 2024**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is seeking feedback on the implementation of the Water Resources and Development Act (WRDA) 2024. The Corps will hold stakeholder participation sessions and accept comments over a 60-day period. The public comment period will end on April 28, 2025. To ensure your comment is considered during the development of guidance, comments should be received on or before that date. In addition, three stakeholder sessions will be held to allow the public to provide input on any provisions in WRDA 2024 at the following dates/times:

- March 26, 2025, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. Eastern;

- April 2, 2025, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Eastern;
- April 9, 2025, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. Eastern.

Anyone interested in attending a stakeholder session or submitting a comment can do so [here](#).

## **Trump Administration and DOGE Initiate Cutbacks Across the USACE**

The Trump administration, through the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) led by Elon Musk, has initiated significant staff reductions within the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). These actions aim to streamline government operations and reduce expenditures but have raised concerns about their impact on essential services. The cuts include the following:

- **Staff Buyouts and Workforce Reduction**

In March 2025, the USACE offered buyouts to approximately 3% of its civilian workforce, affecting 1,068 employees across various roles and locations worldwide. This initiative aligns with the administration's broader goal of reducing the federal workforce to cut government spending. Eligible employees were informed about the buyout program, which allows them to remain on the payroll through September 30 without the obligation to work in person, with potential reductions or eliminations of their duties during this period.

- **Closure of Regional Offices**

Beyond workforce reductions, DOGE has targeted the closure of several USACE district offices. The General Services Administration (GSA) notified the USACE of plans to terminate leases for district offices in Jacksonville, Florida; Charleston, South Carolina; and Chicago, Illinois. The Jacksonville office, located in the Prudential Building, houses approximately 800 employees responsible for critical projects, including Everglades restoration and hurricane response efforts. The potential closure of these offices has raised concerns about the administration and maintenance of vital infrastructure and services in these regions.

- **Operational Concerns**

The reduction in staff and closure of regional offices have elicited warnings from experts regarding potential risks to public safety. The loss of specialized personnel responsible for operating and maintaining dams and other critical infrastructure could compromise public safety and the effectiveness of water management systems. Dam safety experts emphasize that without these essential employees, the integrity and safety of waterway infrastructure could be jeopardized, affecting millions who rely on these services.

In summary, the Trump administration's actions, executed through DOGE, have led to significant staffing reductions and the closure of key USACE offices. While intended to reduce government spending, these measures have sparked concerns about their potential impact on public safety and the delivery of essential services.

## UPDATE: TFG Special Reports

TFG has been closely monitoring and providing updates on actions taken by the Trump administration. TFG has recently updated its Special Report on “[Executive Actions from the Second Trump Administration](#)”. This report details the executive actions taken since President Trump entered office on January 20<sup>th</sup>.

Additionally, TFG has released a new Special Report on the “[Impact of Executive Action on Federal Funding](#)” which examines how the Trump Administration’s executive orders may affect federal funding. We are actively monitoring these rapid federal policy shifts and will continue to provide updates on new developments.

## Advocacy Update

With the passage of the full-year Continuing Resolution (CR) to fund the government through September 30, 2025, Congress can begin to focus on FY 2026 budgeting and other legislative priorities on its agenda.

### North Topsail Beach CBRA Mapping Issue

As we previewed in last month’s report, we have been working closely with Representative Murphy’s office, the House Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife, and Fisheries (Committee), and North Topsail Beach Alderman Tom Leonard to prepare refined legislative language for reintroduction this year. We are excited to report that Representative Murphy introduced [H.R. 1885](#), the *Town of North Topsail Beach Coastal Barrier Resources System Map Amendment Act of 2025*. The updated legislative language, which we developed over the past five months, is more specific about which parcels in unit L06 would be removed from the CBRS and addresses feedback from committee staff and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

TFG will continue to work with Representative Murphy and all parties to ensure this legislation advances and is signed into law.

### Washington D.C. Advocacy Trip

TISPC’s 2025 advocacy trip to Washington on April 28 through April 30 is quickly approaching. TFG has started the process of planning meetings and documents based on the outlined federal priorities the Commission approved during the February meeting.

We have begun reaching out to offices to schedule meetings and will keep the Commission updated over the coming months as we confirm meetings and prepare meeting documents. **We have proposed**

**Thursday, April 17<sup>th</sup> at 11 am for a briefing call with participants before the Washington D.C. meetings to discuss the schedule and important talking points for each meeting.** We will send meeting invites to attendees when it is confirmed all participants will be available.

Draft meeting materials and talking points will be sent before the April 17<sup>th</sup> call so we can discuss them together. We (Ward and Smith and TFG) will make any necessary changes to the meeting materials as a result of our discussion well ahead of our meeting in D.C. We will also print the meeting materials and assemble the meeting packets. Packets will be provided for each of you in addition to everyone we will be meeting with during the trip.

As a reminder, the meeting materials and packet provided for the Washington D.C. advocacy meetings next month will serve in lieu of the standard April monthly report.