



TO: TOPSAIL ISLAND SHORELINE PROTECTION COMMISSION

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SUBJECT: MARCH MONTHLY REPORT AND LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

DATE: MARCH 20, 2026

The March Monthly Report and Legislative Update provides information on the following:

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Advocacy Update

Surf City CSRM Beach Renourishment Project

We have continued our efforts to work with the Army Corps of Engineers to secure approval for the Surf City CSRM renourishment project. In late January, we received an update that the complete package had been reviewed and sent to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for review. This is the last step in the process. We are giving OMB the time they need for review and anticipate an answer by the end of April. Should any updates arise in the approval process, our team is ready to promptly and fully assist the Corps in answering any questions from OMB.

North Topsail Beach CBRA Mapping Issue

As Congress continues its legislative work, we have continued to work with the delegation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and committee staff to ensure H.R. 1885/S. 1724 remains a top priority. Following the technical assistance received from U.S. Fish and Wildlife in February, which was shared with the Commission and North Topsail Beach, Congressman Murphy's office, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife have continued to engage in ongoing discussions this month. We are encouraged by this continued dialogue and expect further updates next month as appropriations season wraps up. We will continue to work with the delegation and committee staff to advance this legislation and will update the Commission as developments arise.

Washington Advocacy Trip Planning for 2026

TISPC's 2026 advocacy trip to Washington, scheduled for April 20 through April 22, is quickly approaching. TFG has begun planning meetings and documents based on the Commission's federal priorities.

We have begun reaching out to offices to schedule meetings and will keep the Commission updated over the coming month as we confirm meetings and prepare meeting documents. **We have proposed Wednesday, April 8th at 2 pm for a briefing call with participants before the Washington, D.C. meetings to discuss the schedule and key talking points for each meeting.** We will send meeting invites to attendees when it is confirmed that all participants will be available.

Draft meeting materials and talking points will be sent before the April 8th call. We (Ward and Smith and TFG) will make any necessary changes to the meeting materials as a result of our discussion 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 participant.

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

Washington News

President Trump Delivers State of the Union, War with Iran Threatens Congressional Legislative Agenda

President Donald Trump delivered the 2026 State of the Union address on February 24, 2026, to a joint session of Congress in Washington, D.C. The speech lasted nearly one hour and forty-eight minutes, making it the longest State of the Union address in U.S. history. In the address, Trump reviewed his administration's first year since returning to office and outlined priorities for the coming year. His remarks emphasized economic policy, immigration enforcement, national security, and foreign affairs, while also highlighting individual Americans and military personnel recognized for service or heroism. Trump presented his administration's policies as strengthening the U.S. economy and national security, discussed trade and tariff policies, promoted domestic energy production, and called on Congress to codify parts of

his healthcare framework. Immigration enforcement and border security were also prominent themes, as were international tensions with Iran — with Trump reiterating his administration's "peace through strength" approach to foreign policy.

Since the State of the Union, several major developments have unfolded across each of those areas. Most significantly, the United States and Israel launched a joint military campaign against Iran beginning on February 28, striking more than 2,000 Iranian targets and killing Iran's Supreme Leader along with dozens of other top officials. Iran has retaliated with missile attacks on U.S. bases and regional allies, and the U.S. has now struck more than 7,000 targets across Iran, with the Pentagon signaling operations could expand further. The Pentagon has informally raised a supplemental budget request of up to \$200 billion to fund the war effort, though the figure has been met with skepticism from both Democrats and some Republican allies. Congressional Republicans are weighing whether to include Iran war funding in a second reconciliation package, though significant divisions within the GOP over offsets and unrelated add-ons present potentially difficult hurdles.

On the congressional front, lawmakers are managing a crowded and contentious legislative calendar as they approach a two-week Easter recess beginning March 27. The Senate voted to begin debate on the SAVE America Act, Trump's controversial election integrity bill that would require proof of citizenship to register to vote and a photo ID to cast a ballot. While the bill advanced to the floor on a 51-48 party-line vote, it faces a steep path to passage, as it will need 60 votes to overcome a Democratic filibuster. Simultaneously, House Republican leadership is pressing forward with plans for a second budget reconciliation bill, a follow-up to last year's One Big Beautiful Bill, focused on reducing costs for Americans, fraud prevention, and potentially Iran war funding, though significant skepticism within the GOP conference remains about whether a second reconciliation package can actually pass. Democratic opposition to Iran war funding makes it virtually impossible to reach the 60-vote threshold needed for a standalone supplemental bill in the Senate, pushing Republicans toward reconciliation as potentially their only viable path to deliver the Pentagon's expected request of up to \$200 billion. Senate Majority Leader Thune has threatened to cancel the Easter recess if negotiators cannot strike a deal to reopen DHS before lawmakers depart on March 27, adding further pressure to an already packed legislative schedule heading into the spring.

Senator Markwayne Mullin Set to Become Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Head, Following Removal of Secretary Kristi Noem

Senator Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) appeared before the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee for his confirmation hearing on March 18, following President Trump's decision this month to remove Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem from her post. The hearing grew heated, particularly when Committee Chairman Rand Paul challenged Mullin over past remarks and raised concerns about his temperament to lead the agency. Mullin sought to differentiate himself from Noem at several points during the hearing, pledging to admit mistakes, cooperate with the DHS Inspector General, and commit to nominating a permanent FEMA administrator. The day after the hearing, the Senate committee advanced his nomination, with Senator John Fetterman (D-PA) providing a key vote in favor. His confirmation by the full Senate is expected in the coming weeks.

Noem's removal this month followed mounting criticism of her leadership at DHS, including controversies over immigration enforcement, spending decisions, and internal management disputes. Of particular

concern was a directive requiring her personal approval for all DHS grants and contracts over \$100,000, which critics say created a major bottleneck, delaying more than 1,000 FEMA contracts, grants, and disaster assistance awards. The policy reportedly slowed aid to communities recovering from major disasters, with some estimates indicating that more than \$1 billion in hazard-mitigation funding and other disaster relief resources were effectively held up in the review process — raising serious concerns among lawmakers and emergency management officials about the effect on disaster response and recovery. We will continue to monitor the Mullin confirmation and its implications for FEMA funding and disaster assistance.

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Remains Shutdown

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) remains shut down, now entering its second month after funding lapsed on February 14. Numerous agencies under DHS, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and the U.S. Coast Guard, continue to feel the squeeze of the funding lapse, with tens of thousands of employees working without pay. Employees have begun missing paychecks, prompting federal unions and employee organizations to demand that Congress reach a bipartisan solution to end the shutdown. The strain has been particularly acute at TSA, where callout rates have spiked nationwide, and hundreds of officers have left the force, leading to significant airport delays in some cities.

The standoff continues over funding for Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP), as well as Democrats' demands for increased accountability. Bipartisan talks have shown signs of progress, with top Republican and Democratic negotiators meeting in person with White House border czar Tom Homan, the first formal sit-down since the shutdown began 33 days ago. Republicans have pointed to DHS Secretary-nominee Mullin's pledge during his confirmation hearing to require judicial warrants for ICE agents entering homes and businesses as a meaningful concession, with lead GOP negotiator Sen. Katie Britt calling it a show of good faith. Despite the increased urgency, negotiators acknowledged that the two sides remain far apart, and no deal has been reached. Senate Majority Leader Thune has threatened to cancel the upcoming two-week Easter recess unless lawmakers can strike an agreement before March 27. We will continue to monitor developments given the shutdown's direct implications for FEMA funding and disaster assistance.

North Carolina Primary Elections

North Carolina voters participated in statewide primary elections on March 3, 2026, to select party nominees for federal offices, including the U.S. Senate and all 14 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. The most prominent federal contest was the open U.S. Senate race created by the retirement of incumbent Republican Senator Thom Tillis. Former governor Roy Cooper won the Democratic primary, while former Republican National Committee chair Michael Whatley secured the Republican nomination, setting up a competitive general election in November. The race is expected to draw significant national attention and spending, as control of the Senate could be influenced by the outcome in the closely divided state.

Nonpoint Water Pollution Funding Bill Approved by House T&I Committee

The House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Committee advanced bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the EPA’s Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 319 nonpoint source pollution grant program at \$200 million annually through FY 2031. [H.R. 7376](#), the “*Local Water Protection Act*,” sponsored by Reps. Hillary Scholten (D-MI) and Brian Mast (R-FL) would continue funding efforts to reduce nonpoint runoff pollution from farms, roads, and construction sites that can carry chemicals, sediment, and fertilizer into waterways.

Supporters called the long-standing program a proven tool for improving water quality and aiding states like Missouri and Michigan. However, Rep. Scott Perry (R-PA) opposed the measure, arguing it intrudes on private property rights. The program was previously targeted for cuts in the Trump Administration’s FY 2026 budget proposals, but received \$175.25 million in current-appropriated funding.

Army Corps Seeks Public Input on Nationwide Permit Program Reforms

The Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is soliciting public input on potential changes to its nationwide permit (NWP) program under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, as announced in a March 16 Federal Register notice. The Corps will consider the feedback in a future rulemaking aimed at improving permitting efficiency.

The solicitation responds to calls from a broad industry coalition, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Home Builders, and American Farm Bureau Federation, that had urged the Corps to pursue additional reforms beyond its recently finalized NWP reissuance package. Key issues include raising acreage thresholds for permit eligibility, increasing mitigation thresholds, and accelerating pre-construction notification timelines.

The Corps is specifically seeking input on measures to reduce unnecessary review, improve efficiency in processing permit applications, and ensure that authorized discharges into waters of the United States result in no more than minimal environmental impacts.

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