Building Coastal Resilience in Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities

Update for the Great Lakes Legislative Caucus

March 2022
About the Cities Initiative

- Binational coalition of over 125 U.S. and Canadian mayors working to advance the protection and restoration of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River

- Current focus on COVID relief, water equity, water infrastructure funding, and coastal resilience
Understanding Coastal Resilience Challenges

- **Variability** – Water levels in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River basin are naturally variable with cyclical highs and lows.

- **Severity** – Climate change is exacerbating these fluctuations with recent years reaching record high water levels.

- **Damage** – High water levels, paired with severe storm events and wave action, are leading to greater erosion and flooding events.

- **Threat** – Erosion and flooding threaten public and private properties, critical infrastructure, shoreline habitat, and recreation / tourism potential.
Coastal Resilience Program Priorities

**RESEARCH**
- Coastal Resilience Needs Assessment Survey
- Resource evaluation
- Forecasting future coastal conditions / impacts

**STRATEGY**
- Mayors Advisory Council on Coastal Resilience

**ADVOCACY / POLICY**
- U.S. and Canadian priorities for funding and technical support available to local municipalities

**EDUCATION / ENGAGEMENT**
- Lake Michigan Coastal Resilience Initiative
- Climate Literacy
- Presentations

**IMPLEMENTATION**
- Regional work groups focused on project development
- Resources and support for planning and decision-making
Research: Needs Assessment Survey

- **61%** of communities are **highly concerned about coastal issues** and **67%** have seen an **increasing level of interest** in addressing coastal issues.

- **Current concerns** are primarily focused on responding to:
  - Shoreline / bluff erosion
  - Flooding / high water levels
  - Infrastructure damage
  - Storm frequency / severity

- **Funding for mitigation projects and planning** is a high priority for communities; however, existing funding **opportunities do not meet this need** for most communities to respond to coastal issues.

- Communities noted **support from state, provincial and federal agencies** as very important to their efforts to respond to coastal issues; however, current support is **not meeting the needs** of coastal communities.
Research: Needs Assessment Survey

Anticipated future expenditures over the next 5 years for coastal impacts
(Underrepresentation of actual need)

U.S. Responses: $1.95 billion USD
Canadian Responses: $0.26 billion USD
Total: $2.21 billion USD
Strategy: Mayors Advisory Council on Coastal Resilience

- Formed in February 2021 to convene mayors, field practitioners, and researchers to explore and prioritize most pressing coastal needs
- Leveraged exploration to develop binational, U.S. and Canadian recommendations covering the following topics:
  - Improving access to relevant resources and funding
  - Identifying and filling data and information gaps
  - Boosting coordination and collaboration across all levels of government and between public and private entities
  - Elevating coastal resilience as a priority across the basin
- Recommendations will serve as the roadmap for developing and implementing action plans in 2022
Implementation: Regional Coastal Resilience Work Groups

- Program focuses on identifying municipal coastal resilience projects and developing implementation roadmaps to get projects funded
- Pilot programs started in Wisconsin (Lake Michigan) with support from the Fund for Lake Michigan and SE Michigan with support from the Erb Family Foundation
- Wisconsin pilot has identified 60+ potential projects across 13 communities and currently are narrowing down to one project per participating community
- Expanding work in 2022 with support from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to cover Illinois, Indiana, West Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin’s Lake Superior communities
Advocacy: U.S. Priorities

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative

Army Corps of Engineers:
- Great Lakes Coastal Resilience Study
- Continuing Authorities Program (CAP)

FEMA:
- Safeguarding Tomorrow through Ongoing Risk Mitigation (STORM) Act
- Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)
- Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)

NOAA:
- Coastal Zone Management Program
- National Sea Grant College Program

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation:
- National Coastal Resilience Fund
Advocacy: Canadian Priorities

Implement a Canada Water Agency

Support Climate Adaptation for Coastal Communities
- Establish a joint Office of Shoreline Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience with a $1 billion federal commitment
- Reinstate federal shoreline restoration funding for communities along the St. Lawrence Seaway
- Consult with cities in development of Canada’s first National Adaptation Strategy
- Advance a green infrastructure Centre of Excellence at Infrastructure Canada

Engage Municipalities in the Development of Climate Change Adaptation Tools

Enable Municipalities to Protect Water Quality for Their Communities
- Relaunch the Clean Water and Wastewater Fund
- Commit $1 billion to the Freshwater Action Plan
Thank You!

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