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April 30, 2020

Brigadier General Thomas J. Tickner  
Commanding General and Division Engineer  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
North Atlantic Division  
302 General Lee Avenue  
Fort Hamilton, NY 11252-6700

Dear Brigadier General Tickner:

In light of the attached Federal Emergency Management Agency's Major Disaster Declaration (FEMA-4597-DR) for the State of New Jersey, I am writing to request a follow up meeting to the February 12, 2021 site visit I coordinated in Bay Head, NJ with LTC David Park and his team to survey the damage caused by Winter Storm Orlena on Jan. 31st to Feb. 2nd.

I remain grateful to LTC Park who personally attended with Corps staff—examining the dunes and offering guidance within a week of my first call. His swift action to meet with me and Mayor Bill Curtis—as well as the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection staff, state, county and other local officials—in February, and his team's willingness to expedite permits needed to address the extraordinarily dangerous 18-foot cliffs the storm created at the edge of the dunes, was greatly appreciated.

That said, we were disappointed that the Corps determined that the storm was not an "extraordinary storm event" and has not to date offered federal funding to help with the costs of repair and/or fully mitigate the significantly hazardous conditions created by the storm.

Under the April 28th Major Disaster Declaration, FEMA will now provide funding to assist communities like Bay Head (and others in Ocean and Cape May counties) for costs of restoring certain infrastructure damaged by Orlena. It is anticipated that FEMA will help pay for rebuilding of the Corps project elements the Non-Federal Sponsor is required to maintain, such as cross overs, replacing fencing, split rail fencing and plantings. However, FEMA will not fund sand replenishment since that is the Corps' responsibility.

Thus, the Declaration provides a new opportunity for the Corps as well, to reassess and consider timely funding to assist in beach renourishment, needed repair and possible mitigation efforts to forestall future damage.

In naming Ocean and Cape May Counties in the Declaration, the Administration underscored the view many of us expressed at the site visit—that this storm was not a one-size-fits-all event and instead created major damage in certain areas that warrant federal attention and support. I believed then and still believe today that basing assessment of the damage in Bay Head (in Central New Jersey) on the wave readings at tide gauges located north in Sandy Hook and south in Atlantic City resulted in an inaccurate finding of a non-extraordinary event.

When standing in Bay Head viewing the utter destruction of the dunes, it was hard to see how the storm would not be considered a significant or extraordinary event.

Therefore, based on the affirmation of the declared devastation to the New Jersey coastline and the release of federal funds to help communities recover, I respectfully request a meeting with you and appropriate staff to explore additional emergency assistance the Corps may offer immediately as well as efforts to secure the planned and now emergent renourishment project and critical mitigation strategies.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH  
Member of Congress

cc: Lieutenant Colonel David Park  
Commander  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineer  
Philadelphia District  
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100 Penn Square East  
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