



Information Alert

State-Federal Relations Division

Senate Approves Long-Awaited Disaster Relief Bill, House Approval Anticipated After Memorial Day Recess

May 24, 2019

On May 23, the U.S. Senate passed a \$19.1 billion disaster-relief bill that provides federal funds for numerous populations affected by a number of 2018 and 2019 natural disasters including hurricanes, wildfires and flooding. The bill is expected to be approved by the House when members return from Memorial Day recess, as a request for approval by unanimous consent was objected to by Rep. Chip Roy (R-Texas). President Donald Trump has also indicated his support. The [funds are spread across a number of federal agencies](#) including many falling under the jurisdiction of the NCSL's Natural Resources and Infrastructure Committee.

Agriculture—The bill provides \$3 billion in aid for farmers and ranchers, including blueberry and peach growers affected by 2017 disasters, and also waives the limit on adjusted gross income for certain producers to receive payments under USDA's trade aid program. The bill also includes \$558 million for emergency conservation programs to repair damaged farmland as well as \$150 million to repair facilities in small, rural communities affected by disasters. Another department within USDA, the U.S. Forest Service, would receive \$720 million to help cover wildfire suppression efforts

Army Corps of Engineers—Overall, the bill provides \$3.25 billion for the Corps, with \$740 million directed towards construction of "high-priority flood and storm damage reduction projects" and \$908 million to repair damaged projects. An additional \$1 billion is appropriated to "prepare for flood, hurricane and other natural disasters."

Environmental Protection Agency—The agency will receive \$414 million for wastewater and drinking water infrastructure resiliency projects, waste disposal needs, issues with underground storage tanks, and technical assistance

Interior—The bill contains \$311.9 million for Interior to repair and rebuild damaged facilities that includes the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the National Park Service (NPS)

Transportation—The bill provides \$1.6 billion to help repair damaged highways, through DOTs emergency relief program, \$10.5 for emergency transit repairs and gives FAA access to unused emergency funds from 2017.

For more information on the bill or questions relating to implementation, please contact NCSL staff, [Ben Husch](#) and [Kristen Hildreth](#).