



**AMERICAN  
GREAT LAKES PORTS  
ASSOCIATION**

## **2020 Position Paper**

# **Coastal Resiliency**

### **Summary:**

Throughout the Great Lakes region, coastal areas are under threat from fluctuating lake levels and extreme weather events. While we cannot control the weather, ports and their host communities can be better prepared through long-term planning. The Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study was launched in 2016 by Great Lakes states in partnership with Army Corps of Engineers and other federal partners. It was formally authorized by Congress in 2018 and will ultimately result in recommendations for future structural, non-structural, and regulatory measures to protect shorelines.

### **AGLPA Position:**

Congress and the Administration should include funds in the FY2021 Energy and Water Appropriations Bill and Corps of Engineers' workplan to conduct the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study.

### **Additional Background:**

As recently as 2013, water levels in the Great Lakes were at historic lows. They are now at historic highs with severe flooding along the shoreline of Lake Ontario, Erie and Michigan. Combined with extreme weather events such as storms or severe winters, port infrastructure is being challenged. This infrastructure includes navigation channels, breakwaters, jetties, dock walls, and warehouses. For example, in 2017 and again in 2019, the Port of Oswego was damaged by a combination of high water, flooding and severe wave action. In early 2020 the majority of the Port of Milwaukee was flooded with waves overtopping the city's breakwaters.

After Hurricane Sandy damaged areas of the North Atlantic coast in 2012, Congress directed the Corps of Engineers to conduct the Atlantic Coast Comprehensive Study, a multi-year effort to identify coastal storm risk management strategies for communities. The study also recommended further analysis of nine focus areas along the coast. In these locations the Corps is conducting feasibility studies which will examine, among other things, the need for structural modifications.

The lessons of Hurricane Sandy taught that while we cannot control the weather, we can be better prepared. In 2018, Congress authorized the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study, a multi-year partnership

between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the eight Great Lakes states. The study's goal is to develop a regional plan to improve shoreline resilience for both the man-made and natural environment. This effort will include an evaluation of shoreline infrastructure such as breakwaters, jetties, and seawalls. It will also evaluate non-structural measures such as dredging, beach nourishment, wetland and barrier island creation, and land use reforms such as changes to zoning and setbacks. Although long term in its focus, the study will result in a suite of recommendations and perhaps future federal projects to modify Great Lakes harbors and improve resiliency.

The four-year study is estimated to cost \$12 million with the federal government paying 75% of the total and Great Lakes states contributing the 25% non-federal share.