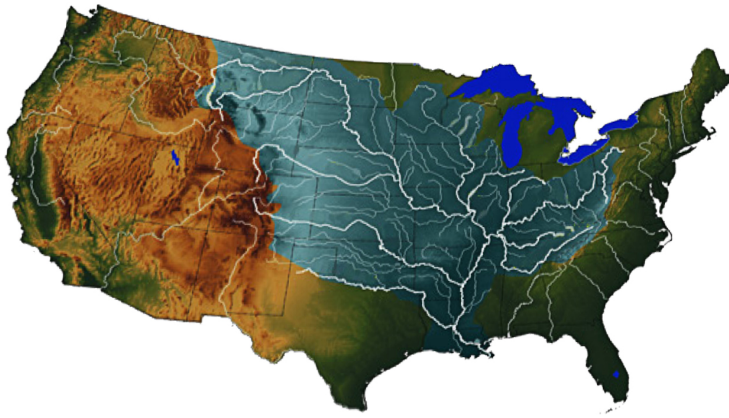


BIG RIVER COALITION



Sean M. Duffy, Sr.
Executive Director
4741 Utica Street, Suite 200
Metairie, LA 70006

Office (504) 833-4190 x 805
Cellular (504) 338-3165
sean.duffy@bigrivercoalition.org

June 11, 2019

Fiscal Year 2019 Emergency Flood Recovery Appropriations Request

Members,

The Mississippi River Ship Channel is in critical need of Supplemental Funding to respond to the ongoing flood emergency that has been artificially controlled by the repeated and historic operation of the Bonnet Carré Spillway. The Bonnet Carré Spillway's operation has never before been required in back-to-back years or twice in the same year, the structure was operated in 2018 and has now been opened twice in 2019 and remains open.

The Mississippi River Ship Channel is deficient and shoaled in with a maximum allowable freshwater draft of 44 feet, although earlier this year the Ship Channel had shoaled into 41 feet. The annual average of sediment removed from the Ship Channel in the area of Southwest Pass is 19 million cubic yards, already in Fiscal Year 2019 over 34 million cubic yards of material have been removed and the Ship Channel has been deficient since January 2019.

The Big River Coalition estimates the present supplemental funding need for the Mississippi River Ship Channel (Baton Rouge to the Gulf of Mexico) to be \$75 million based on the following needs:

- 1) SOUTHWEST PASS:** The Corps will need to extend the present hopper dredge contracts, secure additional hopper dredges and award a cutterhead dredge contract based on historic estimates for a need of 4 to 5 dredges working into August to restore federally authorized channel dimensions. The ability to extend or award these contracts is critical to the recovery of the Mississippi River Ship Channel in Southwest Pass, there are four key areas that have remained deficient throughout the Great Flood of 2019: the Venice Jump, Cubits Gap, the Head of Passes and the Jetty End of Southwest Pass. The Corps is reduced to three hopper dredges to try and maintain four areas and will be unable to restore the Ship Channel that remains reduced to 44 feet although Congressionally authorized to 45 feet.

Because of the historic shoaling remaining in Southwest Pass a cutterhead dredge is also needed, cutterhead dredges beneficially use all material to restore wetlands and protect the Ship Channel from storm surge and subsidence.

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Southwest Pass is the top priority as the entrance and/or exit to the Mississippi River Ship Channel – “the revolving door to international trade.”

SOUTHWEST PASS SUPPLEMENTAL NEED is estimated to be \$27 Million;

- 2) **CROSSINGS ABOVE NEW ORLEANS:** There is substantial shoaling across the majority of the Crossings (estimates of up to 25 feet of shoaling), two dustpan dredges have been working for weeks and the third is expected to be on scene by mid-July. The Crossings will be deficient when the flood stage water levels recede. The three dustpan dredges will be required into Fiscal Year 2020 and the extra usage must be funded, the requested funding increase would allow the Corps to use a hopper dredge to help restore the Crossings after Southwest Pass is fully restored.

CROSSINGS SUPPLEMENTAL NEED is estimated to be \$18 Million.

- 3) **HOPPER DREDGE DISPOSAL AREA (HDDA):** The hopper dredges responding to the deficient areas of the Ship Channel in the area of Southwest Pass have placed record amounts of material in the Hopper Dredge Disposal Area. The HDDA project is critical to maintain full use of the disposal area for the hopper dredges assigned to dredge this reach of the Ship Channel. All material removed from the HDDA is beneficially used, each dredge contract creates 400 or more acres of wetlands in the environmentally sensitive birds’-foot delta.

HDDA SUPPLEMENTAL NEED is estimated to be \$30 Million.

TOTAL SHIP CHANNEL SUPPLEMENTAL NEED is estimated to be \$75 Million.

The wettest yearlong stretch in the contiguous United States was from April 2018 to April 2019, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) National Centers for Environmental Information. The attachment was provided by the National Weather Service (NOAA) today and highlights that the related “Consecutive Days Above Flood Stage” in 2019 has already eclipsed records from Cairo (Illinois), Natchez (Mississippi), Red River Landing (Louisiana) and Baton Rouge (Louisiana) and indicates the record for Greenville (Mississippi) will be eclipsed later this week. The Supplemental Funding will help restore authorized channel dimensions to remove record amounts of sediment carried downriver by record precipitation and record flooding.

Sincerely,



Sean M. Duffy, Sr.
Executive Director