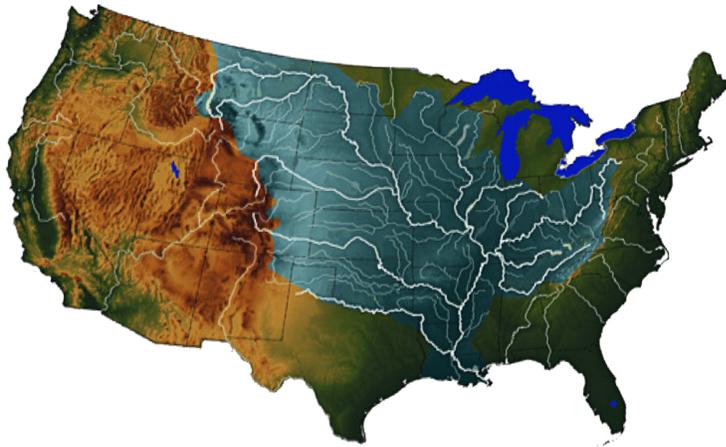


BIG RIVER COALITION



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September 7, 2021

President of the U.S. States
Honorable Joe Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

MISSISSIPPI RIVER SHIP CHANNEL HURRICANE IDA RECOVERY

Dear President Biden,

Please accept this letter on behalf of the Big River Coalition documenting concerns related to recovery of the Mississippi River Ship Channel from the devastating impact of Hurricane Ida. The following list of needs represents priority matters to help the Mississippi River Ship Channel recover based on the changes to channel conditions and the destruction caused by Hurricane Ida. The prioritized list was compiled in checking with navigation stakeholders working to restore commerce on the nation's most critical artery of trade.

- 1) **U.S Army Corps of Engineers:** Sections of the jetties protecting and defining Southwest Pass were reportedly washed away earlier this afternoon, the restoration of these jetties represents a crisis for navigation on the Mississippi River Ship Channel. An estimate of funding needed to repair these jetties is not available at this time. Performing channel maintenance to maintain authorized channel dimensions in the area of Southwest Pass will be next to impossible until the failed sections of the jetties at Southwest Pass are restored. Channel migration threatens the loss of the entrance and exit of the Ship Channel.
- 2) **U.S Army Corps of Engineers:** Funding to dredge within the Pilottown Anchorage Area (Mile 6.7 Above Head of Passes [AHP] to Mile 1.5 AHP). Recovery efforts must include dredging critically needed portions of the severely deficient deep-draft anchorage in accordance with Section 106 of the Water Resources Development Act of 2020 (WRDA 2020). This anchorage is a critical component for safe navigation and its continued shoaling has made large portions of this anchorage inaccessible for vessel usage. This request is for Supplement Funding in the amount of \$30 million to conduct emergency dredging within the Pilottown Anchorage. This level of funding would restore historic channel depths to this important anchorage area to provide increased capacity to safely anchor vessels transiting Southwest Pass.
- 3) **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA):** Lower Mississippi River Physical Oceanographic Real-Time System (PORTS[®]). NOAA PORTS sensors need to be established to assist safe navigational practices and remove conflicting information such varied vertical clearances listed at bridges crossing the Ship Channel, current meters need to be relocated to areas that will provide accurate mean surface velocities, and modernize the suite of tools available to provide pilots and mariners with real-time data. The investment of \$1 million to NOAA's PORTS program would remove conflicting data and increase data accuracy. The precision of these sensors is key to efforts to promote and protect safe navigation.

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- 4) **U.S Army Corps of Engineers:** The Ship Channel deepening remains on hold due to failed attempts to locate and accurately provide clear hydrographic evidence of the depth over five obstructions identified in the Venice Corridor. To conduct and confirm the depth of cover of the four pipelines and utility cable (one) and others located under the Ship Channel on the Crossings above New Orleans.
- 5) **U.S Army Corps of Engineers:** Funding to perform crucial levee and bank stabilization and remove sunken or submerged vessels from the Ship Channel and off the Mississippi River flood control levees. Too early to estimate the funding requirement.
- 6) **U.S. Coast Guard:** Funding to repair or replace missing and damaged aids to navigation across the Mississippi River Ship Channel, too early to properly estimate costs of full restoration.
- 7) **U.S Army Corps of Engineers:** Funding for two additional dredge contracts to restore and maintain federally authorized channel dimensions. Estimated funding \$40 million.
- 8) **U.S Army Corps of Engineers:** Early award hopper dredge contracts: Supplemental Funding level of \$40 million to fund two “early award” large to medium size hopper dredge contracts. The early award contracts were included in the Regional Dredge Demonstration Program and have been successful at increasing channel reliability, taking action prior to the channel becoming deficient first, before advertising emergency dredge contracts.
- 9) **U.S Army Corps of Engineers:** Hopper Dredge Disposal Area (HDDA) The HDDA project is critical to maintaining full use of the disposal area for hopper dredges working on the Ship Channel in the area of SWP. All material removed from the HDDA is beneficially used, each dredge contract creates 500 acres more of wetlands in the environmentally sensitive birds-foot delta.): Supplemental Funding level of \$20 million to fund a cutterhead to dredge and beneficially use the material removed from the Hopper Dredge Disposal Area.

The Big River Coalition is working to keep maritime commerce moving after the impacts of Hurricane Ida that devastated much of lower Louisiana, the Coalition is working to support our navigation stakeholders and local Port Authorities and to fund efforts to recover the Ship Channel. Efforts to recover facilities, remove obstructions across the Ship Channel, increase the integrity of hydrographic surveys and promote technologically sound methods and precise data are key to recovery and coastal resilience. Emergency responses are needed to repair roads and levees in maritime sectors, increased funding to dredge deficient channels and remove coastal surge driven shoaling are urgently needed, repairs to pilot stations, grain elevators and dock facilities. Funding for temporary housing and the ability to shuttle critical marmite workers to remote or cutoff job sites, funding to repair maritime infrastructure, funding to counter the increased costs associated with COVID protocols while aggressively working to remove supply chain bottlenecks.

Sincerely,
Sean M. Duffy, Sr.

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Executive Director