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Excerpts of the Statement of
U.S. REPRESENTATIVE CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
MEMBER OF CONGRESS
APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND WATER
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
March 13, 2013

Chairman Frelinghuysen and Members of the Subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to speak today regarding the importance of the Army Corps of Engineers' beach replenishment projects in New Jersey.

Chairman Frelinghuysen, I would like to again express my deep gratitude and respect for your extraordinary leadership on the legislation and we all appreciate your continued focus on the importance of these projects through this hearing and many other efforts you have undertaken. The "Frelinghuysen amendment" is making—and will continue to make—a profound difference in the lives of our constituents and communities throughout the Northeast.

After Superstorm Sandy came ashore and devastated the region, first responders courageously rescued people trapped in homes and cars often with minimal regard for their own personal welfare, safety and well-being.

Everyone rallied around the clock. Governor Christie led with strength, vision, empathy and compassion and had no qualms whatsoever about making his voice heard loud and clear in Washington. Emergency management personnel, police and fire and EMT, the National Guard, elected officials and County OEM Directors like Sheriff Shaun Golden of Monmouth were resourceful and tenacious, and like everyone else, sleep deprived.

And our local mayors—well, they were like NFL quarterbacks, working with their OEM directors—running the plays, making the calls—minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day.

Faith based organizations helped feed and clothe and shelter. Private voluntary organizations were on the scene in droves. Our neighbors to the north, west, and south poured into the state to help JCP&L and PSE&G restore power and remove fallen trees—a herculean task. Driving back to Robbinsville one late night with my wife Marie after being in Middletown

and other Shore towns all day, we were overwhelmed to see a long line of utility trucks—like the cavalry to the rescue, there must have been 50 trucks—heading to the shore.

Business owners of every stripe—including restaurant owners and supermarkets—generously donated their time and products especially food. NJ journalists ensured that everyone was kept abreast of all the latest information. Knowledge is power—especially in advance, during, and after Sandy. The private sector stepped up to the plate, was generous almost to a fault, and hit it out of the park.

Sandy was the most destructive storm ever in our region and arguably the second or third most costly in America's history.

Since Superstorm Sandy, I have seen the catastrophic damage to our coastal communities and the devastation brought on by this horrific storm. New Jersey's almost 130 miles of pristine coastline was badly battered, hit by the severe wind, high waves and rising ocean.

What struck many of us was the contrast between damage in the towns that previously participated in Army Corps beach replenishment programs (which had less damage), and in those that did not. In those municipalities where the Corps built higher berms, the flood waters had diminished impact. The Corps projects proved themselves extremely worthwhile, saving lives and property, underscoring the need to expand and expedite this essential work. Prevention works.

In Ocean County—in places like Surf City, Beach Haven and Brandt Beach (projects completed only recently)—where the Corps constructed high berms and widened beaches, damage to houses, businesses and other infrastructure, and as a result, the cost to rebuild, was significantly less than in towns where similar re-nourishment efforts have not yet begun.

Mr. Chairman, the Army Corps issued their interim report, as prescribed by the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act, 2013 (PL 113-2). The Corps' report listed a number of projects in various stages of construction that will need to be rebuilt to ensure existing projects, though damaged, will be able to provide the same protection in the unfortunate event of a future storm. One of these projects, the Sandy Hook to Barnegat Inlet is critical to the coastal communities of Monmouth County. As their report points out “[d]egraded coastal features have resulted in increased risks and vulnerability from future storm events.” I am hopeful that the Corp will be able to begin construction as early as this summer to fix this project and therefore mitigate future risk.

Mr. Chairman, the “Frelinghuysen amendment” included an important forward-thinking provision to ensure the long-term sustainability of our coastline, our coastal communities and their economy: a comprehensive Army Corps study on how we can best reduce future flood risks. I would like to draw your attention to one issue that I believe the Corps should take into account.

As you know from our work together on Wreck Pond and your work on this Subcommittee, we have many coastal lakes and beachfronts that are contiguous or nearby so

they contribute to the flooding risk, water quality, and beach closures. There are lakes in Monmouth and Ocean Counties, including Lake Como and Sylvan Lake, whose flooding caused more damage than the storm coming in from the beach front.

Just yesterday, my good friend Assemblyman Sean Kean raised the issue of coastal lakes in Monmouth County, calling them “important on so many levels” and introduced legislation asking for us to review dredging and infrastructure. Accordingly, I respectfully request your Subcommittee and the Corps agree that these lakes should be included in any analysis of how best to mitigate flooding and protect our shore line and coastal communities in the future. Inclusion of our coastal lakes in the pending study ensures that all relevant information is properly evaluated.