



**Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**

Washington, DC 20515

**Bill Shuster**  
Chairman

**Peter A. DeFazio**  
Ranking Member

February 1, 2018

Mathew M. Sturges, Staff Director

Katherine W. Dedrick, Democratic Staff Director

Mr. Ryan A. Fisher  
Acting Assistant Secretary  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
108 Army Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20310-0108

Dear Mr. Fisher:

It has come to my attention that the Port of Port Orford, Oregon, is no longer scheduled to receive necessary repairs to its breakwater this year, due to Army Corps funds being redirected to disaster assistance. I write to you asking that you consider including funding to address the repairs needed to Port Orford's failed breakwater in the Army Corps Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) Work Plan.

With a population of just 1,159, the rural coastal community of Port Orford relies on its port as its economic engine. The most recent data (from 2014) of fish landings from Oregon's Department of Fish and Wildlife show that Port Orford landed 1,363,902 pounds of commercial fish and shellfish, valued at \$3.4 million— ranking as the 120<sup>th</sup> major U.S. port by value landed. While the Port relies primarily on its commercial fishing fleet, it is also host to a marine research industry and range of recreational boating activities.

Prior to the Corps' construction of the breakwater in 1968, the Port was a deep-water port accommodating up to 400-foot lumber carriers. One year after the breakwater was built, the harbor became shoaled, necessitating emergency congressional authorization for the first dredging of the harbor. Since that time, shoaling has been the biggest obstacle for the Port, due to the unique nature of the crane operated boat launch, and vulnerability to shoaling at this critical dockside location in the harbor.

Additionally, the breakwater has been damaged by repeated storms over the years, but in 2014 Port Orford was hit with a major winter storm consisting of 100 mile per hour winds and waves reaching 40 feet in height. There were even reports of large boulders from the breakwater wall rolling across the cement dry dock. The storm caused drastic damage to port assets and damaged the breakwater to the point where the midsection is now completely breached and unravelling. Storm damage, coupled with the fact that the channel and harbor lack annual dredging by the Corps, has created significant obstacles for the fishing community. Without annual dredging, shoals now prevent boats from accessing the ocean and launching except at high tide. This shoaling has also increased wave impact along the dock wall, making launch and retrieval extremely dangerous.

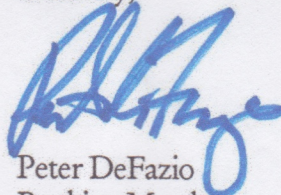
Mr. Ryan A. Fisher  
February 1, 2018  
Page 2

Because of the cost of dredging, boat damage, and limited launching caused by shoaling, the breakwater must be modified to alleviate the shoaling problem. The Corps stated in its July 2014 breakwater inspection report that the role that the breakwater plays in encouraging sediment deposition should be evaluated prior to designing a repair of the structure.<sup>1</sup> Thanks to FY17 supplemental funding, the Corps was able to begin drafting plans and specs to repair the breakwater, but the port has recently been told that there is no further funding currently available to move forward on performing the repairs.

This breakwater modification and repair is vital to the Port of Port Orford. I request that you strongly consider including funding in the Corps FY18 Operations and Maintenance Work Plan to move forward on those repairs. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact me or have your staff contact Elizabeth Hill of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Democratic Staff at (202) 225-3274.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



Peter DeFazio  
Ranking Member

---

<sup>1</sup> Port Orford Breakwater Site Inspection Report, 23 July 2014.



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
CORPS OF ENGINEERS, PORTLAND DISTRICT  
PO BOX 2946  
PORTLAND OR 97208-2946

AUG 31 2018

Mr. Tom Calvanese, President  
Port of Port Orford Commission  
PO Box 490, 300 Dock Rd.  
Port Orford, OR 97465

Dear Mr. Calvanese:

The Army Corps of Engineers, Portland District (Corps) has successfully secured storm supplemental funding in Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 to conduct the repair of the Port of Port Orford's (Port) breakwater. The Corps' report "Evaluating Opportunities to Reduce Shoaling within the Federal Navigation Channel at Port Orford" (April 2018) concludes that these repairs are the best alternative to maintain the federal project. Therefore, we are currently preparing a contract that is scheduled to be awarded in January 2019, with construction scheduled to begin in June 2019. However, it has recently been brought to our attention that the Port may not support the maintenance repair of the breakwater. This letter is to request that the Port officially respond in writing as to whether or not the Port supports the breakwater repair, or would prefer that the breakwater be left as is.

In 2012, the Corps completed a major maintenance report (MMR) for the breakwater repair. That MMR selected the preferred alternative of repairing the breakwater fully, with a cross section constructed of larger, denser stones, and having an increased crest height. The MMR considered a breached alternative of the breakwater to allow for the potential for sediment to move out of the channel. The potential for that movement of sediment was questionable, and in 2013 we secured Regional Sediment Management funds to conduct a particle tracking study to evaluate if a modification to the breakwater design could alleviate channel shoaling. The results of that study indicate that there is no viable solution for alleviating the Port's shoaling problem through breakwater modification while maintaining the intended function of the breakwater, which is to protect the Port from damaging wave action. Based on the Corps' extensive analysis, the prudent course of action is to repair the damaged breakwater, while continuing current maintenance dredging practices and operations.

With that said, I do understand that there may be local concerns wanting to look at longer-term possibilities that might reduce the need for dredging and/or provide other benefits to Port operations. Towards that end, we'd be happy to explore existing authorities to look at possible modifications to the Port Orford federal project. However, please know that to do so, we will have to compete for future federal dollars and may require a non-Federal cost-share partner. Any outcomes from the investigation would also need to compete for future construction appropriations prior to being implemented. Current supplemental funding dollars cannot be used for this purpose as they were appropriated for the breakwater repair.

The Corps requests that the Port respond, in writing, with their support of the breakwater repair, or if the Port would prefer that the Corps stop work on the repair contract. If the Port does not want the breakwater repaired, the Corps will follow up on discussions to see what the next steps forward might be. Your response by September 30, 2018 will allow the Government time to reprogram acquired Storm Supplemental Funds to other priority work should repairs be stopped. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Kate Groth at (541) 514-8488.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin J. Brice". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "K".

Kevin J. Brice, PE, PMP  
Deputy District Engineer for  
Programs and Project Management



## *Port of Port Orford*

Post Office Box 490  
Port Orford, Oregon 97465

Telephone (541) 332-7121  
FAX (541) 332-7121

e-mail: [portoffice@frontier.com](mailto:portoffice@frontier.com)

---

Mr. Kevin Brice, PE, PMP  
Deputy District Engineer for  
Programs and Project Management

September 17, 2018

Dear Mr. Brice,

The Port of Port Orford is pleased to learn of the availability of \$6.5M in emergency storm supplemental funds for the interim repair of the existing breakwater at the Port of Port Orford. We understand that the USACE is committed to the strategy of using available supplemental funding for the emergency breakwater repair. We understand the USACE is also committed to continued annual maintenance dredging operations.

We look forward to working with the USACE during the execution of this interim repair project. We will continue to work with Kate Groth to ensure progress on these projects.

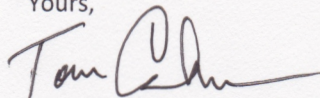
Given the findings of the USACE and the USAERDC that the current breakwater design is causing severe shoaling of the navigational channel, we were disappointed to learn that these funds could not be used to explore alternative configurations that would alleviate the shoaling while providing protection from the damaging wave action.

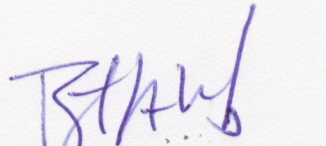
It is our understanding that the USACE analysis was restricted to the footprint of the existing breakwater, and did not consider modifications beyond that footprint. We appreciate the Corps' willingness to explore modifications that might occur beyond the existing footprint, and could reduce the need for dredging while providing protection to the harbor to permit safe passage of ocean going vessels.

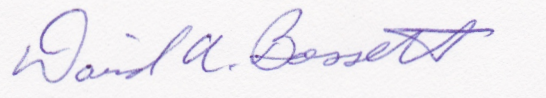
We look forward to working with you to explore future modifications to the breakwater design to alleviate the chronic shoaling while protecting the port from damaging wave action.

Thank you for your work on behalf of the constituents and users of the Port of Port Orford.

Yours,

  
Tom Calvanese, President

  
Brett Webb, Vice President

  
Dave Bassett, Secretary/Treasurer P.E. CBO.

Port Commission  
Port of Port Orford