

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 27, 2026

Lieutenant General William H. Graham, Jr.
Chief of Engineers and Commanding General, U.S. Army
Corps of Engineers
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
441 G St., NW
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Dear Lieutenant General Graham, Jr.,

We are writing regarding the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) decision to terminate the Coastal Storm Risk Management Study of the Delaware Inland Bays and Delaware Bay Coast—also known as the Back Bay Study.

As you know, Congress authorized the Back Bay Study to examine storm risk management challenges in Delaware and identify solutions that our communities can implement in partnership with the federal government. Delaware is the lowest-lying state in the nation and faces vulnerabilities associated with sea-level rise, coastal flooding, and increasingly severe storms. The Back Bay Study specifically focuses on Sussex County, which remains particularly vulnerable to coastal storm surge, recurrent flooding, power outages, extreme high tides, and other safety risks that have intensified due to rising sea levels and changing weather patterns.

The unfortunate decision to terminate this congressionally authorized study will leave Delaware communities without the critical information necessary to strengthen infrastructure resilience, protect public safety, and support local economies that depend on the long-term health of our beaches, bays, and waterways. It will also impair the ability of the USACE staff to plan appropriately and understand both current and future threats. Coastal flooding already threatens homes, roads, businesses, and essential infrastructure throughout Sussex County and surrounding communities. For years, Delaware's local and state governments have worked in good faith with USACE in anticipation that this study would provide the necessary guidance to advance long-needed solutions to protect Delawareans.

Agriculture is Delaware's single largest land use. More than 2,300 family farms utilize Delaware's land for agricultural production, bringing billions of dollars in economic activity to the state.¹ Failure to complete this study and advance mitigation planning is likely to further expose Delaware's farmland to flooding, saltwater intrusion, soil erosion, and crop loss. Sea-level rise along the Delaware Bay and River is already affecting agricultural lands, placing Delaware farmers and economically vital farmland at increased risk.

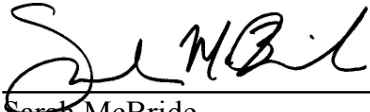
This Congressionally authorized study began in November 2022 and was paused in July 2023 to adjust its scope. It resumed in May 2024 following collaborative efforts between USACE and the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC). According to the notification we received, USACE terminated the study because the study team was unable to "develop a scope and budget that is compliant." Given the significance of this project and the years of work already invested by federal, state, and local partners, we are deeply concerned not only by the insufficient explanation provided for this decision, but more importantly by the serious implications this termination could have for the long-term safety and prosperity of Delawareans.

¹ https://www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/Ag_Overview/stateOverview.php?state=DELAWARE

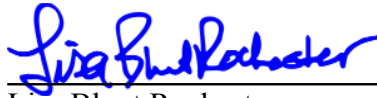
This study was directed by Congress in response to the urgent need to better understand and mitigate flood risks facing Delaware communities. We therefore request a meeting in the coming weeks to better understand the challenges USACE identified and discuss potential pathways to resume or restructure this effort in a manner that fulfills the study's intended purpose and addresses the critical needs of Delawareans.

As sea levels continue to rise, Delawareans simply cannot afford for USACE to walk away from this Congressionally authorized effort. We respectfully request the restoration of the Back Bay Study and a written response and briefing by June 1, 2026. We look forward to your prompt response and to continuing our partnership on behalf of Delaware communities.

Sincerely,



Sarah McBride
Member of Congress



Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator