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1912-2012  
American Association  
of Port Authorities  
Alliance of the Ports of Canada, the Caribbean, Latin America and the United States

September 2, 2011

President Barack Obama  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The twin disasters of unprecedented floods in the Midwest and Hurricane Irene have had a devastating impact on our Nation. Lives have been lost, neighborhoods flooded, and businesses displaced. Tens of thousands of Americans need your leadership to help them recover. As Irene approached landfall last week, you demonstrated what good government can do by warning of its dangers and of the need to take action in the interest of public safety. Now, in the wake of widespread inland and coastal devastation, only the Federal government has the expertise and financial resources to repair damage to critical water infrastructure. Your leadership is vital to making recovery a reality, which can only be done if your Administration proposes an Emergency Disaster Relief package shortly after Congress returns from its recess.

The Federal agencies tasked with leading the response and recovery effort are currently lacking the appropriated funds necessary to carry out this mission. Federal Emergency Management Agency's Disaster Relief Fund is now down below \$1 billion, requiring FEMA to move Midwest recovery funds to meet the immediate response needs in the wake of Hurricane Irene, rather than long-term rebuilding. The Army Corps of Engineers alone will need in excess of \$4 billion for repairs to inland and coastal infrastructure. FEMA is reported to have exhausted its available funds and is also in need of additional funding. Unless repairs are made to the water resource infrastructure that has been damaged, the risk to public safety will remain enormous. Hundreds of miles of levees must be inspected and repaired, while scores of East Coast ports and waterways need restoring to their authorized depths and dimensions.

An Emergency Disaster Relief package will not only protect hundreds of thousands of lives, it will provide the long-term infrastructure investment our country needs. The investment of a dollar of Federal funds in coastal and inland water resource infrastructure provides a return of at least \$7 in property and infrastructure damages avoided. That is millions of dollars in savings that otherwise would be spent by FEMA in post-disaster relief, not to mention the unquantifiable benefits to life and safety.

In the past several years, supplemental appropriations bills have been used to fund defense expenditures that could well have been anticipated and included within the regular budget process. We fully understand your opposition to this practice. The inland and coastal flooding the Nation has recently experienced are of historic proportions. Neither the events nor their devastation could have been anticipated when you prepared your FY 2012 budget.

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For More Information, Contact the Water Resources Coalition:  
legislation@marloweco.com  
info@waterresourcescoalition.org  
(202) 775-1796

We respectfully ask that you send to Congress an Emergency Disaster Relief package that will provide funding for the Corps of Engineers, FEMA, the Department of Agriculture, and other agencies charged with leading recovery and response efforts. Without this type of timely intervention that only you as President can lead these economically vital river and coastal areas of the country will not be able to recover.

Sincerely,

Water Resources Coalition  
Inland Waters Conference  
American Association of Port Authorities  
American Shore & Beach Preservation Association

Cc: Majority Leader Harry Reid  
Minority Leader Mitch McConnell  
Speaker John Boehner  
Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi  
Chairman Daniel Inouye  
Ranking Member Thad Cochran  
Chairman Harold Rogers  
Ranking Member Norm Dicks