

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Cole  
Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Vice Chair  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa L. DeLauro  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2026

Dear Chairs Collins and Cole, Vice Chair Murray, and Ranking Member DeLauro:

We, the undersigned 59 organizations, urge you to support critical investments in flood recovery and resilience for Appalachian communities in the Fiscal Year 2027 appropriations bills. We represent and work with communities across Appalachia that are impacted by extreme precipitation and flooding, communities often still recovering from the last record-breaking storm when another one hits.

Changing climate and weather trends are making extreme precipitation and flood events more common, and more destructive, in Appalachia.<sup>1</sup> There have been more than 20 federally declared flood or flood-related disasters in the region over the last decade. The ability for Appalachian states to mitigate, respond, and recover on their own is becoming increasingly challenging. Appropriate, timely federal assistance to states prior to and following a disaster—along with investments in data, mapping, and research—are crucial to protect lives and livelihoods while easing financial burdens on federal, state, and local agencies. Below are the investments we ask you to support in the FY 27 appropriations bills. In all appropriations bills, we also ask you to exercise your oversight obligations over the Executive Branch to ensure that all funding enacted by Congress remains obligated to its legislative purpose, including the contracted grants, programs and salaries of career civil servants charged with helping Americans respond to, recover from and reduce the damage of disasters.

- **\$175 million for the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program, and \$2 billion for a FEMA pre-disaster mitigation program.** Investing in resilience before a disaster strikes saves lives and money; it is a morally and fiscally sound investment that protects American lives and our national economy from the impacts of disasters. FMA and a pre-disaster mitigation program (like FEMA’s Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities, or BRIC, program) have both provided essential support for flood resilience and should be protected and robustly funded. FMA funds projects that reduce or eliminate repetitive flood loss risk in communities insured by the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). BRIC supports community projects and capacity-building activities that reduce flood risk, including via nature-based hazard mitigation. Demand for BRIC funds far outpaced available funding every year the program was available.<sup>2</sup> FEMA decided not to accept FMA applications for 2025, and many communities are still awaiting funds that were committed in previous competitions. These decisions harm the ability of communities, in Appalachia and across the U.S., to proactively plan for flooding disasters. FEMA must continue to make substantial investments in pre-disaster mitigation.

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<sup>1</sup> [Where the Sky Keeps Bursting](#) from *The Washington Post*; [Atmospheric Moisture and the increase in flooding in Appalachia](#) from. ReImagine Appalachia.

<sup>2</sup> Demand exceeded available funds by more than five times in 2023. See [more from Headwaters Economics](#).

- **\$312,750,000 for FEMA’s Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis program.** Communities depend on floodmaps to understand their present and future flood risk, inform development regulations, and help prepare for disasters. Robust funding for this program is crucial to modernize FEMA’s flood risk maps and incorporate updated research and projections on climate impacts, especially the extreme precipitation Appalachia is increasingly vulnerable to. The funding will also enable FEMA to expand the maps to cover more parts of the U.S. Thousands of U.S. communities lack flood maps entirely, while others completely miss current flood risk, leaving property owners uninformed and unprepared. This can have devastating consequences: some of the counties hit hardest by Hurricane Helene had flood insurance rates of under 2 percent.<sup>3</sup>
- **\$5 million for the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement’s (OSMRE) Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative.** This chronically underfunded program returns mined lands to a hardwood ecosystem, more closely resembling the original mine site’s ecology. Conventional reclamation is ineffective at returning hydrologic and ecological functionality to mined lands, and may even contribute to greater surface water runoff and subsequent flood impacts during extreme weather.<sup>4</sup> ARRI’s ecologically informed reclamation approach mitigates flooding, benefits the broader environment, and creates jobs in the process. We appreciate the inclusion of \$500,000 for the Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative in the FY26 appropriations bills—the first time this impactful program has ever received dedicated federal funding. Greater funding is needed to truly scale the program, especially given growing concerns on flooding and other negative community impacts arising from unreclaimed or inadequately reclaimed mine sites.
- **\$33 million for the U.S. Geological Survey’s (USGS) Federal Priority Streamgage (FPS) network, and \$75 million for the USGS Cooperative Matching Funds program.** USGS streamgages provide timely, accurate information on streamflows across the U.S. They are essential infrastructure that helps numerous federal agencies, local governments, emergency response managers, community organizations, and individuals make decisions about public safety, and respond to extreme weather events. The Cooperative Matching Funds Program supports the National Streamflow Network, which compliments the FPS. National Streamflow Network streamgages are funded via a cost-share (up to 50 percent) between USGS and Tribal, regional, state, or local partners. Funding shortfalls at USGS have already led to the closure of dozens of FPS streamgage sites across the country, while years of stagnant funding for the Cooperative Matching Funds Program have put pressure on struggling state and local communities to fill funding gaps. Robust funding for both these USGS programs will ensure more communities at risk from extreme weather, including rural communities across Appalachia, can monitor and respond to floods. USGS should prioritize deploying additional streamgages in Appalachia, given the region’s increasing risk from extreme precipitation events.
- **Preserve robust funding for weather forecasting and atmospheric and climate research at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).** Appalachians rely on NOAA services and data to get accurate weather forecasts and storm alerts. The agency, largely through its Office of Oceanic and Atmospheric Research, also supports cutting-edge research to make precipitation forecasting more accurate and timely, improve warning systems, and deepen our understanding of weather and climate. Continued staff and budget cuts to NOAA compromise work that keeps our communities safe. Cuts to these programs also shift forecasting and research burdens to the local level; putting this financial and technical burden on low-resource states and communities, of which there are many across Appalachia, makes it tougher to prepare and manage for impending disasters.

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<sup>3</sup> [Thousands of uninsured homes were in Helene’s path](#) from *The Washington Post*.

<sup>4</sup> [Hydrologic modeling to examine the influence of the forestry reclamation approach and climate change on mineland hydrology](#), in *Science of The Total Environment*.

- **A report from the Administrator for the Rural Housing Service on the distribution of Single Family Housing Rural Disaster Home Repair Grants.** Originally established following the devastating floods in eastern Kentucky in 2022, this program helps low-income, rural households repair and rebuild their homes by supplementing FEMA’s individual assistance program. The program was originally allocated \$60 million, and the Rural Housing Service has spent less than \$26 million over three years. Given the demand for funding after disasters—especially in low-income, rural communities—USDA should provide clarity about how they can improve the program and spend funds more expediently in the future since the policy change to allow individuals experiencing disasters since calendar year 2022 to be eligible.

Sincerely,

Appalachian Citizens' Law Center

Appalachian Voices

Action Together NEPA

Allegheny-Blue Ridge Alliance (ABRA)

The Alliance for Appalachia

American Rivers Action Fund

Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Appalshop. Inc.

Berwick Arts Association

Center For Coalfield Justice

Chesapeake Climate Action Network Action Fund

Christians for the Mountains

Citizens Coal Council

Climate Justice Alliance

Conservation Voters of PA

Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR)

Friends of the Tug Fork River

Green Sanctuary of First Unitarian Universalist Society of Marietta OH

Grow Pittsburgh

Hip Hop Caucus

Kentucky Resources Council

Kentucky Riverkeeper

Kentucky Student Environmental Coalition

Kentucky Waterways Alliance

Keystone Development Center  
Kids for Saving Earth  
Landforce  
Latino Farmers & Ranchers International, Inc.  
Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Network (LiKEN)  
Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action  
Mountain Association  
Mountain Watershed Association  
National Low Income Housing Coalition  
National Wildlife Federation  
Ohio River Valley Institute  
Pasa Sustainable Agriculture  
Pennsylvania Interfaith Power & Light  
Pennsylvania Sustainable Business Network  
ReImagine Appalachia  
RiverWise  
Roots of Unity Media  
Sierra Club  
Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards  
Southwest Clark Neighborhood Assn.  
Stewart Family Farms  
SWPA Municipal Project Hub  
The Tidewater Coalition  
Three Rivers Waterkeeper  
Utility Workers Union of America, AFL-CIO  
WaterStep  
We the People of Detroit  
West Virginia AFL-CIO  
West Virginia Environmental Council  
West Virginia Land Trust  
West Virginia Nonprofit Association  
West Virginia Rivers Coalition  
West Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster  
Wetlands Watch

Working for Justice Ministry St. Paul's United Methodist Church Allison Park, PA