

Letter from the Coastal Program Manager

January 8, 2024

Do you ever actually see yourself as living through history?

Frankly, most days I don't. I'm too caught up in being a wife, mom, and program manager among other things to notice.

But with the end of the year and the start of a new one, I find myself doing a little reflecting. I'm reminded that 2023 brought "unprecedented", "historical", and "once in a lifetime" funding for coastal programs and resilience work. And because of our top-notch staff and excellent partners, Minnesota is capitalizing.

- The Coastal Program will be providing coastal engineering and climate action planning services starting in 2024, thanks to \$300,000 in non-competitive funding from the Inflation Reduction Act.
- The Coastal Program is ramping up habitat conservation and restoration capacity building efforts, with \$300,000 per year for the next four years. All of this is possible from non-competitive funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.
- St. Louis County is competing for a NOAA Climate Resilience Regional Challenge grant with support from the Coastal Program. If successful, the county will lead a region-wide collaboration to build resilience at the local, state and Tribal government level.

All this good work and big money is swirling in my mind as I hear from our partners at the Coastal States Organization that Congress is looking at cutting base coastal zone management funding. CSO's director summed it up well when he quoted Charles Dickens: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...."

Regardless of what's happening at the federal level, good or bad, the Coastal Program is steadfast in delivering its very best here in our coastal area. We remain committed to our mission to empower and support professionals and leaders in their work to manage the coast. You'll hear more about how we did that in 2023 when staff give their updates at the January 18 meeting.

That same meeting will be a time to look forward too. 2024 marks the Coastal Program's 25th anniversary, and staff want to hear your ideas for how to celebrate this important milestone. More importantly, the council must move forward a recommendation for how to spend remaining 2024 project funds. My sincere thanks to the Executive Committee (Janice and Peder) for their discernment over these last few months and the thoughtful proposal they will be presenting to you.

So, back to my question: Do you see yourself as living through history? The more I think about it, I'm not living through it, I'm making it. This program is making it. We all are making it. Thank you for being a part of the Coastal Program's history. Here's to a great 2024 and a bright future for all of us.

Best,
Amber