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After floods hit the Houston area hard on April 17 and 18, forcing road and school closures and causing the death of eight people, Texas Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) recognized the need for better emergency preparedness in the region. Sen. Cornyn introduced the “Corps” Obligation to Assist in Safeguarding Texas (COAST) Act (S. 2856) less than a month after the devastating storms to begin developing a storm protection system.

The COAST Act would require the Army Corps of Engineers to coordinate with the Gulf Coast Community Protection and Recovery District (GCCPRD) to develop a storm protection plan for the area. The GCCPRD is in the second phase of a Storm Surge Suppression study while the Army Corps has long-standing flood prevention projects in the area, and the COAST Act aims to streamline the process by having the two groups work together.

The Houston and nearby Galveston urban areas are home to the country’s fifth-largest metropolitan population as well as oil refineries and petrochemical plants. Their location puts them at high risk for flooding due to sea level rise.

The COAST Act has been referred to the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee where it will be considered before it can move to the full chamber.

Sources: Congress.gov, E&E News, Gulf Coast Community Protection and Recovery District (GCCPRD), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

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