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Government relations and public affairs at the state level.

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Topsail Island Legislative Update

12/3/2019

During its three-day November session, the North Carolina General Assembly passed bills to help the NC Department of Transportation (DOT) during its funding crisis, and to provide continued recovery from hurricanes Dorian, Matthew, and Florence. NC DOT's cash balance had fallen due to unprecedented hurricane repairs, legal settlements over rights of way and project overruns. [SB 356](#) directs \$100 million to DOT for past and natural disasters, forgives a \$90 million loan and allows an extra \$100 million in road-building bonds. It also includes \$2 million for work expanding living shorelines around critical transportation infrastructure.

The new disaster-relief law ([HB 200](#)) provides nearly \$121 million in state matching funds, largely for storm recoveries from the last three years, funds the state's individual assistance program for people affected by Hurricane Dorian, and includes \$59 million for various efforts meant to help North Carolina prepare for future storms. Legislators will return to Raleigh on January 14<sup>th</sup>.

In the meantime, TISPC will continue meeting with NC Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), legislative staff, and Representative Pat McElraft (R-Carteret) to discuss establishing a definition for 'resilience.' [SB 95](#) reallocated \$5M from Resource Institute to a direct grant for the three towns on Topsail Island. However, the undefined term creates uncertainty about which projects qualify – TISPC is working with legislators, legislative staff, and DEQ to provide background information on what resilience projects look like for our island, and to determine which projects are eligible. We are also in the process of inviting legislators, staff, and administration to Topsail Beach for an up-close look at the dredging operation and resilience projects during the last week of February.