

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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SPO



Maine State Planning Office

Executive Department

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February 10, 2011

Senator Thomas Saviello, Chair
Representative James Hamper, Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

RE: 2011 Annual Report Maine's Beach Management Program

Dear Senator Saviello, Representative Hamper and Committee Members:

Maine's sand beaches are among our state's most important natural resources and an integral feature of our natural resource-based tourism economy. Maine's beaches continue to be threatened by erosion, sea-level rise and coastal storms. The 2006 report, *Maine's Integrated Beach Management Program*¹ (submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources during the 2nd regular session of the 122nd Legislature), advanced thirty-one strategies aimed at improving and sustaining Maine's threatened coastal sand beaches for the benefit of Maine residents, visitors and businesses. With limited existing financial resources, implementation of the report's recommendations depends on collaboration among state agencies, municipalities, the University of Maine, and local and regional stakeholders, including environmental groups, citizen volunteers, and others.

To help ensure continued progress on the report's recommendations, Resolve 2005 c.175², called for the submittal of an annual report (until 2011) on implementation of the beach management program to the Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources (now Environment and Natural Resources). This correspondence summarizes the work of the State Planning Office (SPO), the Department of Conservation's Maine Geological Survey (MGS) and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) who share responsibilities related to beach management.

The following summary of activities is organized by major topic area, corresponding to relevant issues contained in the 2006 report.

Advisory Committee

An 11-member advisory committee (including five state agency representatives, three NGO representatives, one municipal representative, one regional government representative and one representative from the University of Maine) was established in 2007 to oversee implementation of the beach management program. The advisory group provides a venue to discuss problems and

¹ Available at: http://www.maine.gov/dep/blwq/topic/dunes/report06_protect.pdf

² Available at: http://janus.state.me.us/legis/ros/lom/LOM122nd/Res151-200/Res151-200-24.htm#P257_43436

opportunities associated with state and federal regulatory and management programs. The group will be convened again in 2011 to discuss the range of current ideas being discussed with respect to revisions to the coastal sand dune rules regarding beach nourishment.

Erosion at Maine's Beaches

The unprecedented erosion cycle at Popham Beach State Park in Phippsburg ended in late February 2010 when the Morse River cut a new channel to the sea. The river's course change ended the erosion threat to a new bath house and will result in a much larger recreational beach at the state park in the summer of 2011. In 2010, park attendance was limited to about 175,000 visitors, partly due to a narrow dry beach. More detail is on the Maine Geological Survey web site.

In other coastal areas, winter storms from January through March in 2010 caused deep beach erosion. Features never seen before and others not seen for decades, such as relic tree stumps and salt marsh peat, were exposed near the low-tide line. Teams of volunteer citizen scientists measured a dozen beaches monthly and data will be synthesized by the Maine Geological Survey for the next report, the State of Maine's Beaches in 2011 due out this summer. Erosion was about as severe as it was during the 2007 Patriots' Day Storm. Sand lost from the winter storms built sand bars offshore that resulted in unusually strong and focused rip currents this past summer at many large recreational beaches. Lifeguards made an unusually large number of rescues.

Data and Information

The Maine Geological Survey completed a *State of Maine's Beaches in 2009* report³ and released it in association with the Maine Beaches Conference in summer 2009. The report is issued biennially coincident with the conference. It serves as an important compilation of scientific data as well as a public outreach tool. MGS continues to administer two data collection programs that serve as information sources for the report – the Maine Beach Monitoring Program and the State of Maine (Volunteer) Beach Profiling Program (the latter in partnership with Maine Sea Grant and the Maine Coastal Program/SPO.)

Pilot Projects

A cooperative, inter-local agreement was signed by the municipalities of Biddeford, Old Orchard Beach, Saco, and Scarborough to address coastal hazards along the shorelines of Saco Bay. Funding from the Maine Coastal Program enabled the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission and Maine Geological Survey to work with each city or town to plan steps to build community resiliency to erosion, flooding, and sea-level rise. This is the first such agreement among Maine beach communities.

The Maine Geological Survey continues to work with NOAA's National Weather Service and NOAA's Coastal Services Center to model storm surge and wave conditions and to build visualization tools to help communities understand current risks to properties. Saco is one of two pilot locations in the country chosen for participation in this project.

Education and Outreach

The State Planning Office continues to partner with the University of Maine Sea Grant College Program on an outreach project to provide landowners with information about erosion, flooding

³ *The State of Maine's Beaches in 2009* (MGS Open-File Report 09-57) is available at: <http://www.maine.gov/doc/nrimc/mgs/explore/marine/beaches09/contents.htm>

and climate change. Outreach products have included an educational DVD, workshops and a new coastal hazards guide for property owners along eroding bluffs and beaches. Sea Grant will launch a new web site in 2011 to assist homeowners.

SPO, MGS and DEP are currently partnering with the Maine Sea Grant on the 2011 Maine Beaches Conference to be held on July 15th at Southern Maine Community College in South Portland. The conference is a biennial event that attracts 200 landowners, scientists, agency staff and beach stewards for the purposes of advancing knowledge about Maine beaches and provides a forum where homeowners, municipal officials, business owners and recreationalists can work together on issues of common concern.

Funding

Maine's beach management program has not received any additional funding beyond existing staff resources. Success is limited due to lack of resources. Two attempts, in 2007 and 2009, to advance a bond issue for beach restoration were not successful given other state priorities.

Regional Efforts

Maine (as part of the New England Governor's Conference) is a member of the Northeast Regional Ocean Council (NROC), a voluntary partnership of states (CT, RI, MA, NH and ME) and federal agencies that seeks collaboration on coastal and ocean issues of mutual interest. Coastal hazards and climate change have emerged as one of three priority issue areas for the Council. The negotiating power of the five states helped Maine secure \$487K from American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds (through the US Geological Survey) for collection of new high-resolution topographical data. This is the part of a regional funding package for mapping an area from New York City through Cobscook Bay. The data will help improve quality of maps for a variety of uses, including for identifying whether properties are located in floodplains for insurance and construction purposes. Maine's project total was \$823,000 with additional financial assistance from Acadia National Park, Maine DEP, Maine GeoLibrary, Maine State Planning Office, US Department of Agriculture, The Nature Conservancy, and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust.

National and Federal Liaison

Camp Ellis, Saco, Maine

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continued coordination with federal, state, and local interests on issues and concerns related to mitigating Camp Ellis Beach erosion in Saco cause by the north jetty at the entrance to the Saco River. State Geologist Robert Marvinney chaired the *ad hoc* Saco Bay Implementation Team to continue an open dialog between the Corps, state, and local interests. The Corps anticipates completing a draft Environmental Assessment for the National Environmental Policy Act in spring 2011. A legal Project Partnership Agreement between the City of Saco and the Corps still needs to be written. The PPA addresses responsibility for future maintenance and beach nourishment once a project is completed. Maine's Congressional Delegation worked closely with all interests and would be instrumental in securing a federal appropriation for the mitigation effort once a final EA is completed. If a viable project is identified and funded, the earliest construction opportunity would be in the fall of 2012 and last 2-3 years.

Beach Renourishment in Association with Maintenance Dredging

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continued with the design of navigation improvements to the shipping channel in the Piscataqua River from Kittery to Eliot. A new turning basin near Mast Cove in Eliot would be dredged, primarily from the Maine side of the border with New Hampshire. That

dredging project may yield up to 400,000 cubic yards of sand that could be used for beach nourishment. The Corps, Maine Geological Survey, Department of Marine Resources, and Department of Environmental Protection worked with the Towns of York and Wells scoping the option to use the river sand for nearshore beach nourishment. Community concerns in York and transport costs to Wells have led the Corps to seek alternative offshore disposal sites in Maine or beaches in Massachusetts for the dredged material. Coordination with New Hampshire continues and channel expansion is still several years away.

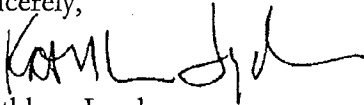
Legislation

The Maine Coastal Program and MGS remain actively involved in dialogue around federal legislation (e.g. reauthorization of the Coastal Zone Management Act and several bills related to climate change) that would potentially provide additional resources to the state for adaptation planning, data development and other activities related to coastal hazards.

Conclusion

Implementation of the Beach Management Program continues, albeit commensurate with limited resources, although several efforts discussed above have successfully leveraged outside resources and expertise. Should the Committee members have questions on this summary report, or desire additional information, please contact me at 624-6223 or kathleen.leyden@maine.gov. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kathleen Leyden
Director Maine Coastal Program

cc: Bill Beardsley, Commissioner, DOC
Darryl Brown, Commissioner, DEP
Tim Glidden, Acting Director, SPO
Robert McAleer, Director, MEMA
Colonel Joel Wilkinson, Acting Commissioner, IF&W
Paul Anderson, University of Maine Sea Grant College Program
Members, Beaches Advisory Committee