



Russell Black
Senator, District 5

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

LD 758 "Resolve, To Update Flood Hazard Data in the Sandy River Watershed"
Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
March 13, 2025

Senator Talbot Ross, Representative Pluecker, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry:

I am Senator Russell Black and I am here today to present my bill, LD 758, "Resolve, To Update Flood Hazard Data in the Sandy River Watershed". I submitted amended language in advance of this hearing and it was distributed to the interested parties list. I have also brought printed copies.

Flooding of the Sandy River has been an ongoing issue in my district as well as surrounding communities. In addition to farmers being affected, border towns such as Farmington, Norridgewock, and New Sharon have seen more flooding over the years, which puts homes, roads, livestock, and farmland at risk. The problem is getting worse, and it's clear that we need more updated tools to respond to these challenges.

Recently, folks in my district have been coming together to discuss these challenges and how we can address them. We quickly agreed that we would be best served by working together—across landowner property lines, across town boundaries, and instead work together within the entire Sandy River Watershed Association (SRWA). We have formed as the Sandy River Watershed Association and are actively meeting and pursuing tools, updated maps, and data to help us learn and adapt.

In January the Association convened a public meeting to discuss what we've been considering and hear from impacted landowners and experts who are interested in helping us gather information. What started as a meeting of 10 or 12 people quickly grew into more than 50 interested individuals! There were representatives from the towns, farmers, members from Trout Unlimited, UMF, emergency management, conservation organizations, state and federal agencies, state legislators, and staff from our Congressional delegation offices. The energy in the room was optimistic and folks were eager to keep the conversation going.

We have since learned that FEMA is in the process of updating floodplain maps, stream lines, and data for the entire lower Kennebec River, including the Sandy River. This work is going to help our communities have more accurate information to address ongoing flood risk. The amended version of LD 758 reflects the fact that some of the work we were pursuing is already underway and instead requests additional data that is necessary to compliment FEMA's work. The SRWC is interested in a geomorphic study within the Sandy River Watershed to update flood hazard data, assess river movement, erosion, and sedimentation, and the potential impacts on flood risk and river health.

I am closely following LD 1, which will create the State Resilience Office within the Maine Office of Community Affairs. I think this initiative would be a perfect pilot or first project for that entity.

Thank you for considering this important bill, and I urge you to support it.

Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry Committee
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Amendment to LD 758
Resolve, To Update Flood Mapping in the Sandy River Watershed to Federal Emergency Management Agency Standards

Proposed by Senator Black
March 10, 2025 updated

Amend the bill by striking out the title and replacing with the following:

Resolve, To Update Flood Hazard Data in the Sandy River Watershed

Amend the bill in section 1 as follows:

Sec. 1. Maine Office of Community Affairs; Sandy River watershed flood-mapping update geomorphic study. **Resolved:** That, in coordination with the United States Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency; the Department of Transportation; the Department of Environmental Protection; the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife; the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry; Maine Geological Survey; the Department of Defense, Veterans and Emergency Management, Maine Emergency Management Agency and other relevant state agencies, the Maine Office of Community Affairs shall ~~develop and implement a pilot project to update flood modeling and flood mapping~~ conduct a geomorphic study within the Sandy River watershed to update flood hazard data within the watershed. The study must include an assessment of river movement, erosion and sedimentation and impacts on flood risk and river health. ~~The office may enter into an agreement with the United States Department of Interior, United States Geological Survey, other federal agencies or a consultant to support development and implementation of the pilot project.~~ The office shall provide technical assistance and coordination to communities within the watershed and to other groups involved in the pilot project, including, but not limited to, regional councils, community and environmental organizations and riverfront landowners. The office shall request or otherwise acquire federal or other nonstate funding to support the costs of ~~developing and implementing the pilot project~~ the study.

SUMMARY

This amendment directs the Maine Office of Community Affairs to develop and implement a pilot project to conduct a geomorphic study, rather than update flood modeling and flood mapping as proposed in the bill, within the Sandy River watershed.