

RE: LD 946

Dear Environment and Natural Resources Committee,

As the City Councilor for Saco's Ward 4, I am writing to offer my strong support for LD946, a resolution to authorize Maine as the nonfederal sponsor with the United States Army Corps of Engineers for the Shore Damage Mitigation project in Saco.

As you know, Camp Ellis in Saco is literally washing away. With each major storm, roads are destroyed and houses are flooded and washed off foundations. Dozens of homes and several blocks have been lost to the ocean since 1867 when the Army Corps of Engineers (ACoE) first dredged the channel and built our Jetty. The ACoE has acknowledged responsibility for the error and congress has allocated ~27 million dollars to mitigate and fix the problem. This may not be enough.

However, this problem is not Saco's alone. The jetty reroutes Saco River sediment throughout Saco Bay, leading to changes in sand deposits in Old Orchard Beach, Biddeford, and Scarborough - much of which requires expensive increases in dredging. This is a truly regional issue affecting a critical natural resource which drives our tourist economy!

As part of the process, the ACoE needs a non-federal sponsor to agree to cover costs above the allocated funds and to take financial responsibility for the Jetty Spur once created. Until someone signs on for that role, there can be no fix. Given the uncertainty of future costs, this is a daunting role for a municipality to take on. Fighting the ocean on behalf of the Saco Bay communities is simply more than the City of Saco can take on alone! The State of Maine is in a much better position to do so. Moreover, doing nothing is not an option. Losing additional homes, roads and beaches while quibbling over who should play what role would be abdicating our commitment to protecting our constituents.

The citizens of my ward need state and federal assistance and we need it now. Please support this bill.

Yours,

Mike Burman
Saco City Council – Ward 4