

Testimony before the Environment and Natural Resources Committee

May 7, 2021

RE: LD 1572, A Resolve to Analyze the Impact of Sea Level Rise

Representative Blume, Members of the Committee, my name is Maeve Carlson, and I am a civil and environmental engineer consulting in water and wastewater treatment services, and I support LD 1572.

I support this bill to incorporate the Maine Climate Council's Science and Technical Subcommittee's recommendation to manage for 1.5 feet of sea level rise by 2050 and 3.9 feet by 2100 to protect Maine's wastewater treatment facilities. Ten wastewater treatment facilities in Maine have been identified as being at-risk to sea level rise per these recommended sea level rise scenarios. The Wiscasset wastewater treatment facility, in my hometown, is on that list.

Wastewater treatment facilities (and collection systems) are located at lower elevations to incorporate gravity sewers in the wastewater collection system design. The facilities are also located adjacent to the ocean, where they discharge the treated wastewater effluent. These characteristics make wastewater infrastructure one of the most at-risk sectors to flooding from sea level rise.

If wastewater treatment facilities are overwhelmed by sea level rise, untreated wastewater may be released into the environment. There can be significant public and environmental health impacts, including the spread of trash and bacteria that can cause beaches and clam flats to be closed. To quote the Maine Climate Council's Emergency Management Sub-group, flooding of these facilities "[poses] a significant threat to community resilience and public health... causing extensive environmental and safety hazards. Furthermore, these treatment plants and sewer district facilities represent significant community investment, and flooding can be costly."¹ These facilities are often multi-million-dollar capital projects, and communities cannot risk losing these assets to the rising seas.

Sea level rise is much more significant than the nuisance caused by a few high tides. This issue can potentially disrupt the critical wastewater collection and treatment services that are crucial to public health. Our communities rely on these services, and I support LD 1572, hoping that the resolve will encourage state agencies to protect our community wastewater infrastructure and make Maine more resilient to sea level rise.

Sincerely,



Maeve Carlson
Water & Wastewater Engineer from Wiscasset, ME

¹ *Recommended Climate Strategies, Actions and Measurable Outcomes*, Maine Climate Council Community Resilience Planning, Public Health, and Emergency Management Working Group
https://www.maine.gov/future/sites/maine.gov/future/files/inline-files/EmergencyManagementSubgroup_FinalStrategyRecommendations_June2020.pdf