

**SLAWG Action Plan**  
**For the**  
**Sea Level Adaptation Working Group**  
**Serving the Saco Bay Communities of**  
**Biddeford, Saco, Old Orchard Beach, and Scarborough**



Memorial Library, Ocean Park, Old Orchard Beach  
Image courtesy of Bill Edwards and NOAA NWS



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With the Assistance of the

**Maine Department of Conservation – Maine Geological Survey  
and the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission**

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and the Participating Partner Communities



**Sea Level Rise Adaptation Working Group:**  
**Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach-Scarborough-SMRPC**  
**Action Plan**

**Purpose:**

The purpose of the Sea Level Adaptation Working Group (SLAWG) is to review information from the Coastal Hazard Resiliency Tools Project that has analyzed the problem of sea level rise, to create a Vulnerability Assessment for Saco Bay, and to develop and implement an Action Plan of implementation strategies for regional solutions. The SLAWG shall limit its scope to its defined region, which shall consist of any coastal estuaries, marshes and beaches subject to tidal influence and storm surges, whether by fresh or salt water, as well as any associated developed areas, roads, and other infrastructure, within the four member municipalities. At this time, the SLAWG has completed its initial versions of a Vulnerability Assessment and this Action Plan, both of which are intended to be continually refined, as the identified actions are researched, designed, and implemented.

**Analysis of Existing Conditions and Identification of Problems and Issues:**

The SLAWG has created an initial Vulnerability Assessment based primarily upon information from the Coastal Hazard Resiliency Tools Project, funded by the Maine Coastal Program, and updates prepared by the Maine Geological Survey and Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission. The group has gathered and studied all of the best available data on Saco Bay issues, which has been produced by the communities, federal and state agencies, environmental groups, and universities. The SLAWG has consulted the Saco Bay Management Plan for guidance, with deference to the fact that its recommendations are ten years old. The assessment identifies properties and infrastructure vulnerable to storms and sea level rise, such as buildings and roads, as well as natural areas at risk, such as saltwater marshes and adjacent uplands. Rough damage estimates have been created for projected inundation of properties and infrastructure. Refines will include damage estimates to utility infrastructure, and more refined estimates of property damage.

**Objective:**

Percent Complete: 100%

Target Completion Date: April 2011

**Goals:**

- *Providing for Public Safety* – The SLAWG will promote safety for residents and visitors to our Saco Bay communities by identifying coastal hazards and developing appropriate adaptation actions in response to sea level rise.
- *Protecting Properties* – The SLAWG will recommend actions that will maximize the protection of both private and public property and infrastructure from the damaging effects of sea level rise.

- *Protecting our Economy* – The SLAWG will focus on identifying potential threats to existing coastal economies from sea level rise. State and local revenue streams from property, sales, and income taxes may be reduced by storm and tide damage. Eventually, retail sales and jobs may be lost as more frequent and severe storms impact tourism and other industries.
- *Preserving Natural Features* – The SLAWG will identify saltmarshes, undeveloped uplands, and beach systems that are projected to be inundated with sea level rise, and recommend actions to protect these natural systems.
- *Promoting Efficiency by Working as a Region* – By all four towns and cities working together, the SLAWG will increase the capacity for combined planning efforts while minimizing costs for potential sea level adaptation projects, by lowering consulting fees for services such as engineering, increasing the likelihood of receiving grant funds, and promoting successful permitting from State and Federal agencies.

## **Principles**

- *Retreat v. Engineering Approaches* - SLAWG will strike a balance between the opposing policies of retreat from the coast versus devising engineered solutions to adapt to sea level rise. SLAWG will strive to use an even-handed approach.
- *Setting Priorities Fairly* - When developing plans for sea level adaptation projects for Council consideration, the SLAWG will rank them for priority according to
  - Rough calculation of benefits versus costs
  - Number and value of properties affected/protected
  - Criticality of an Evacuation Route
  - Natural Values preserved
  - Recreation Values preserved
  - Numbers of people served by the subject infrastructure
- *Transparency* – The SLAWG will update its website and publish timely meeting notices, agendas, and will attempt to stick to its advance schedule. SLAWG will report to the member Councils annually, and when milestones are reached.
- *Geographic Balance* – The SLAWG will strive for geographic balance for the projects it is considering, with the understanding that we can't work on all four communities at once, and some may have to wait for the next turn.

## **Implementation Strategies and Objectives:**

*(Note: The percent complete for each strategy below will be updated annually. Additional projects will be added as necessary. Please note that the numbering of this list does not necessarily reflect the relative importance of the implementation strategy.)*

1. Use regional approaches to plan for improvements; identify sources of funding; and obtaining grants or appropriations for construction or conservation projects on a regional basis. SLAWG will also support individual municipal grant or appropriation requests for such projects.

Objective:

Percent Complete	0%
Target Completion Date	December 2011

2. Create a ranking process, and prioritize a list of potential sea level adaptation construction and conservation projects for the SLAWG to focus on.

Objective:

Percent Complete	0%
Target Completion Date	June 2011

3. Comment on dune restoration; dune grass planting; and federal/state beach nourishment or erosion control efforts that affect one or more communities, including management or deposition of dredged materials.

Objective:

Percent Complete	na
Target Completion Date	Ongoing

4. Recommend the standardizing of floodplain management standards and building code interpretations across jurisdictions to improve resiliency of individual private structures.

Objective:

Percent Complete	0%
Target Completion Date	December 2011

5. Recommend standardizing of ordinance review standards affecting the shorelands adjacent to Saco Bay, as well as standardizing review and controls for water activities across jurisdictions, for structures and activities affected by sea level rise or coastal storms. Such water activities may or may not include land-based development, and could include aquaculture, marina, or green energy production projects.

Objective:

Percent Complete	0%
Target Completion Date	December 2011

6. Provide non-binding comments on various applications for development review affecting Saco Bay that may be vulnerable to sea level rise or coastal storms, to those individual review authorities having jurisdiction.

Objective:

Percent Complete	na
Target Completion Date	Ongoing

7. Complement the efforts of the Towns and Cities that participate in the FEMA Risk Map program, by sharing relevant information already generated by SLAWG projects. It is understood by members of the SLAWG that the FEMA Risk Map Program deals with Federal Flood Insurance Rate Maps, which define floodplains based on current risks. FEMA does not consider sea level rise and associated future flooding risks when determining the floodplain for flood insurance purposes.

Objective:

Percent Complete	na
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Target Completion Date      Ongoing

8. Coordinate with MS4 stormwater planning programs to comply with EPA and DEP requirements.

Objective:

Percent Complete              na  
Target Completion Date      Ongoing

9. Coordinate with the Saco Bay Implementation Team in its efforts to devise a solution to the Camp Ellis jetty and erosion problems.

Objective:

Percent Complete              na  
Target Completion Date      Ongoing

10. Coordinate with the New England Environmental Finance Center in its research on the economic impacts of sea level rise, and the estimation of costs and benefits of various adaptation strategies.

Objective:

Percent Complete              na  
Target Completion Date      Ongoing

11. Monitor changes to statutes, regulations, and ordinances at all levels of government that affect permitting for public or private coastal construction or infrastructure improvements.

Objective:

Percent Complete              na  
Target Completion Date      Ongoing

12. Report to the Councils of each party municipality at least once a year about its activities and to present its annual budget.

Objective:

Percent Complete              na  
Target Completion Date      Ongoing