



March 6, 2013

The Honorable Russell Prescott, Chair
Senate Energy & Natural Resources Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 101
Concord, NH 03301

Subject: SB 163, establishing a commission to recommend legislation to prepare for projected sea level rise

Dear Senator Prescott:

The New Hampshire Planners Association, representing over 200 land use planning professionals in our state, working at all levels of government and in the private sector, takes this opportunity to express support for SB 163, which proposes to create a “Sea Rise Planning Commission” comprised of members of the legislature as well as representatives from various state departments. The Commission will recommend on an annual basis measures designed to prepare for projected sea level rise.

The NHPA recognizes that there is still some debate regarding the degree to which historic changes in the global climate are induced by human activity. However, that the earth’s climate is in indeed changing, and changing in a way that will have serious implications for our way of life, is a generally accepted scientific fact. The modeling varies, but the nearly uniform conclusion is that as a result of climate change sea levels will rise over the next several decades creating a series of very real problems for New Hampshire’s communities, particularly those located along the coast.

It seems to us that the genius of the proposed commission is that by focusing more on solutions rather than causes, it has potential to bring all of our citizens together in a bipartisan manner to work towards a common solution to a real problem instead of simply assigning blame.

While we fully support this proposal, we believe that the bill should be amended to include representatives from the following organizations:

- The Executive Director of the Rockingham Planning Commission, or designee
- The Executive Director of the Strafford Regional Planning Commission, or designee
- The Director of the Institute for the Study of Earth, Oceans, and Space at the University of New Hampshire (UNH EOS), or designee
- The Director of the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP), or designee
- The Executive Director of the New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA), or designee

Each of these entities would bring specialized knowledge – scientific and practical – to the work of the commission. The two regional planning commissions have been very active in the Coastal Adaptation Work Group, and bring a wealth of experience working with coastal municipalities; the UNH EOS is the state’s center for globally-recognized climate change work; PREP has been focused on this problem since long before it became a high-profile public issue, and it provides the unique perspective of estuarine impacts; and the NHMA is the single best voice in the state for municipal issues overall.

For these reasons, the New Hampshire Planners Association urges your committee to recommend the passage of SB 163, together with our suggested amendment. Thank you for this opportunity to provide comment on this very important bill.

Sincerely,

Timothy J. Corwin, Esq.
NHPA Legislative Liaison