

Res. No. 509

Resolution calling on the United States Army Corps of Engineers to reconsider the proposals made in the New York – New Jersey Harbor and Tributaries Coastal Storm Risk Management Feasibility Study pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to consider sea rise in addition to storm surge.

By Council Member Constantinides

Whereas, In 2012, coastal storm Sandy ravaged the New York City metropolitan area causing 60 fatalities and damaging significant resources throughout the area; and

Whereas, As a result of Sandy New York City was left without power, with damaged critical public and private infrastructure, and many New York City residents had limited access to food, drinking water and healthcare; and Whereas, The storm inflicted an estimated \$19 billion in damages and lost economic activity across New York City; and

Whereas, Coastal flooding and storm surge remain a significant risk six years later and present a threat with deadly consequences for people and wildlife; and

Whereas, The New York City metropolitan area has a gross metropolitan product of over \$1.66 trillion and there was a \$15 billion federal investment in post-hurricane Sandy recovery and resilience projects; and

Whereas, The United States Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps), working with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, in partnership with the New York City Mayor's Office of Recovery and Resiliency, have proposed to develop measures to manage the risk of coastal storm damage in the New York City metropolitan area; and

Whereas, The Army Corps plans to address coastal risk management focusing primarily on the creation of surge barriers, flood walls and levee systems that do not address sea level rise; and

Whereas, The coastal risk management feasibility study acknowledges that no coastal risk management project can eliminate the risk of flooding and that given time each design will eventually be exceeded; and

Whereas, The Army Corps feasibility study focuses on a number of options which involve the construction of large permanent in-water barriers that could result in adverse impacts to the New York and New Jersey harbor ecology; and

Whereas, Sea level is rising along the East Coast of the United States faster than it has risen for the last 2,000 years, is accelerating in pace, and could rise by one to two meters this century, threatening millions of Americans with severe flooding; and

Whereas, The New York New Jersey Harbor and Tributaries Coastal Risk Management Feasibility Study does not include an evaluation of the impact of sea level rise on the study area; and

Whereas, The New York City panel on climate change has predicted that sea level will rise at least a foot by 2050 and possibly more; and

Whereas, Local environmentalists have voiced concerns that the Army Corps needs to do a more thorough review of the environmental impacts of each alternative measure and allow for more meaningful public input and participation; and

Whereas, The information provided in the study's scope of work does not give the public sufficient ability to comment on the program design, including the frequency and duration of barrier closures, the barrier heights or the reliance on risk-based assessment; and

Whereas, The extremely large in-water barriers and gates that will close or open for shipping fail to protect New York City and the surrounding communities against sea level rise; and

Whereas, These huge barriers are likely to restrict the migration of striped bass, Atlantic sturgeon, herring, shad, eel and other species important to the Hudson estuary; and

Whereas, These storm surge barriers would also restrict natural flushing from the ocean and inhibit free water movement along the length of the Hudson and its estuary, causing contamination to once again be concentrated in New York Harbor; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States Army Corps of Engineers to reconsider the proposals made in the New York – New Jersey Harbor and Tributaries Coastal Storm Risk Management Feasibility Study pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to include consideration of sea rise in addition to storm surge.

LS 7928/Res SS
8/28/18 6:00 p.m.