

N.J. Legislature
**REPORT OF THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION
TO STUDY SEA STORM DAMAGE**

established pursuant to
Assembly Concurrent Resolution 2 (1954)
and Assembly Concurrent Resolution 1 (1955)

December 1, 1955

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I Background

The extended sea coast and Raritan Bay shore line of New Jersey experience with increasing frequency the fury of sea storms and the severe tidal effects of hurricanes. These serious storms have in the past caused substantial damage to private property and, in addition, have caused heavy damage to publicly owned streets, boardwalks, convention halls and other public buildings, sewage plants, municipal streets and county highways. Following the storm of November 6-7, 1953, Assembly Concurrent Resolution 2 (1954) was introduced. In the preamble, the Resolution emphasized the cost of the storm damage, the repair of which in many instances exceeded the financial capacity of the municipalities and counties, noted the lack of federal or State funds to assist in repairs and replacements of public facilities and stressed the vital interest of the entire State in the operation of the shore resort areas. It should be noted that the annual appropriations made by the State for beach erosion cannot be used for the purpose covered in this report. The Resolution, adopted May 3, 1954, provided for a Commission of eight members, four from the Senate appointed by its President, four from the General Assembly, appointed by the Speaker. The Commission was given the duty of studying

(a) the extent of sea storm damage to State, county and municipal highways, sidewalks, boardwalks, sewers and drainage systems, county and municipal buildings, equipment and property:

(b) to recommend to the Legislature ways and means of affording State assistance to counties and municipalities to restore facilities in such a manner as to minimize future sea storm damage.

The Commission was empowered to call to its assistance, and avail itself of, the services of such employees of any State, county or municipal department, board, bureau, commission or agency as it may require, to employ such stenographic and clerical assistants, and to incur such traveling and other miscellaneous expenses, as may be necessary in order to perform its duties within the limits of funds appropriated or otherwise made available to it.

The Commission was empowered to meet, hold hearings at such place or places as it shall designate and consider such proposals in connection with its studies as it deems advisable, during the recesses of the Legislature, and shall report its findings and recommendations, including those for the adoption of any legislation which it deems necessary or advisable, to the Legislature.

The President of the Senate appointed Senators Farley, McCay, Stout and Vogel. The Speaker of the Assembly appointed Assemblymen Beadleston, Salsburg, Savage and N. C. Smith. When Assemblyman Smith resigned to become state Senator, Assemblyman Kay was appointed in his place.

Early in the fall of 1954, the Commission met and organized. It elected Assemblyman Beadleston Chairman, Senator Vogel Vice Chairman and Assemblyman Kay Secretary. The Commission decided that in order to make an accurate and complete report, it was necessary to obtain the services of a qualified engineer who would make a survey that would provide the data on which the Commission's report would be based. Accordingly, by Resolution the Legislature was asked to appropriate the necessary funds and to extend the life of the Commission. By Assembly Concurrent Resolution 1 (1955) the Commission

was reconstituted with the same membership and officers and was directed to

(a) continue its study of the extent of sea storm damage to State, county and municipal highways, sidewalks, boardwalks, sewers and drainage systems, county and municipal buildings, equipment and property; and

(b) recommend to the Legislature ways and means of affording State assistance to counties and municipalities to restore facilities, repair property damage and reconstruct facilities, in such a manner as to minimize future sea storm damage.

It was given the powers granted in the original Resolution, but in addition was authorized to employ such engineers, surveyors and clerical assistants and incur such traveling miscellaneous expenses as may be necessary to perform its duties and conduct an engineering survey for the determination of the amount of damage already caused by sea storms and of the measures which must be taken in order to make the necessary repairs and minimize future sea storm damage.

Effective July 1, 1955 the Legislature made available to the Commission \$7500. Shortly after the Commission retained William D. Ayers, of Allenhurst, New Jersey, a licensed engineer, to make the required survey. Mr. Ayers was directed by the Commission to gather data with respect to the cost of repairing the damage caused by the November 6-7, 1953 storms from all the municipalities along Raritan Bay from South Amboy and Sayreville and from Sea Bright south along the Atlantic Coast to Cape May. He was also instructed to gather from the Division of Local Government and from the municipalities themselves data revealing the financial status of the

affected municipalities. By showing their legal debt limit and their present net debt, the borrowing capacity and, hence, the ability of these municipalities to provide for their own repairs and clearance work, or the lack of such ability, would be revealed. The survey has been completed and the data compiled provides the basis of this report of the Commission.

II Findings

The engineer retained by the Commission has prepared a table revealing the cost of the damage to publicly owned facilities and the financial position of each affected municipality. This table is reproduced below. A brief explanation of the organization and the contents of this table will assist in understanding how this Commission reached its conclusions.

The left side of the table shows by means of heavy figures the amount of sea storm damage suffered by each municipality and affected county. The total damage from the one sea storm of November 6-7, 1953 is \$1,842,493.02. The "total cost" figure has been subdivided to show in column I the cost to the municipality of repair work already completed by contract with private companies. In the second column is shown the cost of work already completed by public employees. The third column indicates the estimated cost of completing repairs in the many instances where municipalities hard hit by the sea storm of 1953 have been unable, largely because of inadequate finances, to complete necessary repairs to public facilities.

COUNTY	ACTUAL COST OF DAMAGES, ETC. SUFFERED BY INDIVIDUALS			TOTAL	1952, 1953, 1954 - DIV OF LOCAL GOV. - GEO. C. SWILLMAN, DIR.	TOTAL NET DEBIT	PERCENTAGE OF NET DEBIT	
MIDDLESEX					% OF VALUATIONS			
1. SAYREVILLE	15,000.00			15,000.00	18,743,189	1,315,523	1,432,000	7.57
2. SOUTH AMBOY	42,050.00			42,050.00	6,066,007	422,480	305,379	5.03
3. MADISON TOWNSHIP	NO REPORT				3,372,247	236,067	134,330	3.92
MIDDLESEX COUNTY TOTAL =				57,050.00				
- MONMOUTH -								
1. KEYFORT	6,000.00			6,000.00	4,011,732	280,821	177,481	4.42
2. MARSHTON TOWNSHIP	NO DAMAGE				2,832,067	198,244	36,000	1.27
3. UNION BEACH	3,000.00	2,500.00		5,500.00	1,473,910	103,172	437,995	29.71
4. KEANSBURG		50,000.00	45,000.00	95,000.00	4,198,240	293,877	423,993	10.09
5. ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS		5,000.00	18,000.00	23,000.00	2,768,025	193,818	127,250	4.59
6. HIGHLANDS		7,500.00		7,500.00	2,224,978	156,748	474,000	21.30
7. MIDDLETON TWP.	10,000.00	15,000.00	155,000	180,000.00	10,592,568	744,480	693,925	6.55
8. SEA BRIGHT	200.00	7,128.00	27,800	35,128.00	1,419,590	99,371	165,500	11.65
9. MON BEACH		15,500.00		15,500.00	1,431,016	100,171	204,780	14.31
10. LONG BEACH			150,000.00	150,000.00	18,355,633	1,284,892	2,229,734	12.14
11. DEAL	3,060.00	950.00		4,010.00	5,527,283	396,410	527,778	9.54
12. ALLENHURST	12,414.51	1,729.00		14,143.51	2,084,207	145,894	242,826	11.65
13. FREELEY PARK	30,050.95	30,000.00	50,000.00	110,050.95	23,780,320	1,664,622	8,473,520	35.63
14. OCEAN TOWNSHIP	1,826.16	7,623.80	1,264.00	10,814.96	6,477,653	463,436	164,500	2.53
15. NEPTUNE	142,164.82	60,000.00		202,164.82	10,978,612	761,503	317,000	2.80
16. BRADLEY BEACH	42,000.00	23,000.00	160,000.00	225,000.00	5,824,344	410,423	305,500	5.20
17. AVON	55,890.43	12,000.00		67,890.43	2,875,027	201,252	200,000	6.95
18. BELMAR		53,327.01		53,327.01	7,136,023	499,462	382,000	5.35
19. SPRING LAKE	6,368.00	50,000.00		56,368.00	6,444,100	448,987	219,000	3.27
20. SEA GIRT	30,000.00	7,000.00		37,000.00	3,259,008	228,131	128,000	3.92
21. MANASQUAN	54,609.78	7,500.00		62,109.78	3,963,370	276,736	238,324	6.02
MONMOUTH COUNTY TOTAL =				1,360,521.66				
- OCEAN -								
1. PT. PLEASANT BEACH	10,343.00	3,000.00		13,343.00	4,078,778	328,914	176,598	3.75
2. BOY HEAD	16,150.00	6,877.85		23,027.85	2,048,475	143,183	171,000	8.36
3. MANAHOLOING	150.00	1,000.00		1,150.00	2,200,899	152,063	19,000	0.86
4. DOVER TOWNSHIP	NO DAMAGE				8,405,511	588,386	499,023	5.93
5. LANALETTE		69,304.00		69,304.00	2,893,298	202,531	219,904	7.60
6. SEASIDE HEIGHTS		40,000.00		40,000.00	2,842,229	193,956	254,625	8.95
7. " PARK		16,621.00		16,621.00	2,689,874	188,291	155,500	5.78
8. BERKELEY TWP.	NO DAMAGE				1,870,137	130,910	5,000	0.26
9. BRANFLET CITY		1,000.00	2,000.00	3,000.00	358,830	25,118	3,500	0.97
10. HARVEY CERRAS		1,000.00	8,000.00	9,000.00	528,242	36,977	5,000	0.94
11. SURF CITY		2,400.00	9,000.00	11,400.00	1,186,213	83,029		
12. SHIP BOTTOM	1475.11	1,838.40	32,515.20	35,828.71	1,801,787	82,655	70,000	5.92
13. LONG BEACH TWP.		67,000.00	15,000.00	82,000.00	4,837,779	338,645	577,000	11.92
14. BEACH HAVEN		2,000.00	32,000.00	34,000.00	3,003,417	210,239	59,679	1.98
OCEAN COUNTY TOTAL =				338,674.56				
- ATLANTIC -								
1. BRIGANTINE		3,000.00		3,000.00	2,020,511	144,236	878,730	42.64
2. ATLANTIC CITY		5,000.00		5,000.00	88,495,817	6,944,707	13,180,000	14.89
3. VENTNOR CITY		11,750.00		11,750.00	9,972,953	698,107	952,000	9.56
4. MARGATE CITY		5,000.00		5,000.00	7,026,088	492,526	2,463,000	34.86
5. LONGFORD		1,500.00		1,500.00	1,983,316	138,832	207,700	10.47
ATLANTIC COUNTY TOTAL =				26,250.00				
- CAPE MAY -								
1. OCEAN CITY		20,000.00		20,000.00	7,761,458	1,283,302	1,148,000	6.46
2. SEA ISLE CITY		34,000.00		34,000.00	2,093,924	146,575	209,000	9.98
3. AVALON		497.00		497.00	2,763,795	193,466	415,917	15.04
4. STONE HARBOR	NO DAMAGE				3,713,860	259,970	169,500	4.56
5. NORTH WILDMOOD		2,000.00		2,000.00	7,006,066	499,425	566,856	8.09
6. WILDMOOD		2,500.00		2,500.00	11,288,924	789,875	1,483,000	12.69
7. " CREST	NO DAMAGE				4,237,756	296,648	277,915	6.55
8. CAPE MAY		1,000.00		1,000.00	5,633,652	394,356	1,341,728	23.81
9. " FRONT	NO DAMAGE				416,959	29,187	31,000	7.43
10. LOWER TOWNSHIP	NO DAMAGE				2,577,697	180,579	85,218	3.30
11. UPPER "	NO DAMAGE				1,475,130	103,263	33,489	2.27
CAPE MAY COUNTY TOTAL =				59,997.00				
TOTAL OF ALL COUNTIES =				1,612,481.02				

RESULTS OF SEA STORM DAMAGE SURVEY

MAD. FOR SEA STORM DAMAGE COMMISSION ALFRED N. BEEDLESTON, CHAIRMAN.

WILLIAM D. AYERS, JR., ENGINEER

DATA OBTAINED & COMPILATED FROM JULY 1, 1955 TO OCT 1, 1955

The data shown on the right side of the table was obtained from the Division of Local Government. It reveals the financial status of all the affected municipalities, by showing in the first column the average 1952, 1953, 1954 real estate valuations. In the next column is shown the amount that each municipality may legally borrow - 7 percent of average valuation. The third column shows the total net debt of each municipality outstanding as of December 31, 1954, and in the final column is shown the percentage of valuation represented by the present total net debt. If this final column figure is more than 7 percent it shows that the municipality has already exceeded its debt limit.

From an examination of the data it is clearly apparent that many municipalities are financially unable to repair the damage caused by this one sea storm of November 6-7, 1953. No less than twenty-five of the listed municipalities already have a net debt that is in excess of the 7 percent legal limit. Yet, some of these communities were among those most severely damaged.

Keansburg in Monmouth County suffered \$95,000.00 damage and has a net debt that is 10.09% of real estate valuation. Long Branch in the same county suffered a \$150,000.00 loss and has a net debt of 12.14%. Asbury Park suffered \$110,050.95 damage but is in the position of having a net debt of 35.63%. Long Beach Township in Ocean County had a \$82,000.00 loss, yet has a net debt of 11.92%. In many instances these and other communities have already expended large sums through contract or publicly performed repairs to restore many of the vitally needed facilities damaged by the storm. The total cost of uncompleted repairs of facilities damaged in the 1953

sea storm is \$705,579.20.

In a different category are municipalities like Lanalette in Ocean County that have completed the repair of damage caused by this one storm only by exceeding their legal debt limit, or those, like Middletown Township, that could complete repairs only by exceeding their debt limit.

What this means in all too many cases is that as the result of one sea storm causing over \$1,800,000 damage many towns could repair publicly owned facilities only by borrowing, and others could not repair at all because their net debt exceeded the legal limit. It should be noted that even those towns that repaired damage by borrowing could not hope to continue this practice if a series of severe storms should occur within a period of a few years. Yet, the maintenance of streets and highways, sewage plants, boardwalks and other public property are indispensable to the health and welfare of the citizens and are a substantial factor in the continuing growth and economic well-being of all these coastal communities.

This discussion has revealed the impact of just one sea storm. But these sea storms have occurred before and after the 1953 storm. It has been estimated that the 1944 hurricane alone resulted in damages to public property of between \$6 million and \$10 million for all municipalities from South Amboy south to Cape May. Lesser storms before and after 1953, while not so costly, have had substantial impact on certain towns and furnish a threat to the financial stability of many communities. We know also that sea storms will recur, and that there is no means of avoiding the consequences of these "acts of God." It must be remembered that most of these

municipalities affected by sea storms are growing at a rapid rate and have other bonded responsibilities of a normal nature, plus the heavy expense of school construction and operation. In addition, many of these municipalities face serious beach erosion problems which they have met and will continue to solve, partially through their own financial resources. When the heavy cost of sea storm damage is added to the expense arising from the normal capital expenditures of expanding communities as well as the costly efforts to deal with the beach erosion problem, it becomes apparent that these communities on the coastal and Raritan Bay area cannot for long maintain their financial stability. The high value of the resort industry to the State of New Jersey renders this threat to the economic well-being of so many municipalities a matter of highest State concern.

III Recommendations

The Commission has shown how one sea storm, that of November 6-7, 1953 has imposed a serious financial burden on our coastal and Raritan Bay beach communities. But this was only one storm. Repeated costly storms of this nature will confront these communities with a dangerous situation, because they will find it impossible to make the needed repairs to municipally owned facilities occasioned by sea storm damage and at the same time face the beach erosion problem and make the other capital expenditures required by all communities with expanding populations.

Because these municipalities cannot reasonably be expected to bear unaided the heavy burden of normal expenditures plus that caused by beach erosion, and in addition finance the cost of repairs occasioned by these "acts of God" in the form of sea storm damage, this Commission believes that the State should accept its obligation to share in the expense of repairing municipally owned facilities damaged by sea storms.

Therefore, this Commission recommends that the State stand ready to appropriate on a 50-50 sharing basis funds necessary to repair damage caused by sea storms to affected municipalities and counties. The Commission recommends that such appropriations by the State shall be contingent on the approval of the plans and specifications of the contemplated work by the proper State agency in each case, depending on the nature of the work to be performed (e.g., highway repair by State Highway Department).

By this joint action we shall benefit not only the municipalities immediately affected, but will help sustain communities whose financial health is of extreme importance to our State.

Assemblyman Alfred N. Beadleston
Senator Frank S. Farley
Senator Albert McCay
Senator Richard R. Stout
Assemblyman Lettie E. Savage
Assemblyman Paul M. Salsburg
Assemblyman Robert E. Kay

Note: The Honorable Bernard W. Vogel resigned from the Senate before the completion of this report.

