

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3003

Lieutenant Colonel Michael A. Bliss
58th Commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Philadelphia District
The Wanamaker Building
100 Penn Square East
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3390

June 23, 2015

Dear Lieutenant Colonel Bliss,

As the New Jersey Shore Protection Project (Manasquan Inlet to Barnegat Inlet) progresses, relevant parties have encountered challenges with easement agreements and side agreements included in this project. In response to these challenges, I organized a meeting between representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and local Toms River officials. It was our hope that by bringing all the stakeholders together, we could find a workable path forward. Unfortunately that was not the case and there hasn't been any progress made by the Corps towards resolving this issue weeks later. This lack of communication between the Corps and local elected officials is an example of government bureaucracy at its worst.

Throughout this meeting, Toms River Mayor Thomas Kelaher made it clear that the Township of Toms River acquired all necessary easements and requested that the Corps accept said easements, in the same manner that the State of New Jersey has. Forcing Toms River to start over on these easements is an irresponsible and shortsighted decision, as the suggestion that the existing easements are not legally binding could crack open the entire process and undo years of work. It disregards the safety of my constituents, who are beginning another hurricane season without any protection from this project nearly 3 years after Superstorm Sandy devastated the New Jersey coastline. That is unacceptable.

This project must be completed in a timely manner, with minimal disruption to local homeowners and businesses, while still proposing adequate storm protection for the affected communities. I believe that every action should be taken to resolve this situation and move the process forward. To that end I'd like to formally request a determination on the status of the Toms River easements and the reasoning the Corps is using to justify that decision. My constituents expect better and it is my job to hold the federal government accountable when there is a breakdown in the process.

I greatly appreciate your consideration and assistance in resolving this issue.

Sincerely,



Tom MacArthur
Member of Congress