

June 4

FEMA backs off Portland Harbor high-risk zoning **The deal does designate part of the harbor, near the Maine State Pier, a high-risk flood zone.**

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Staff Writer

PORTLAND - City officials and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have reached an agreement to prevent most of Portland Harbor from being classified as a high-risk flood zone.

Details of the agreement will be announced today.

Penny St. Louis Littell, director of the city's Planning and Urban Development Department, said FEMA will give her a final flood map of the harbor this morning, and she plans to discuss it with waterfront property owners before making a public announcement.

Last summer, the agency announced its intention to reclassify Portland Harbor as a high-risk flood zone.

The classification would have prohibited new construction on the waterfront, as well as reconstruction of any structure that was more than 50 percent destroyed. It also would have raised insurance rates for property owners on the Portland and South Portland sides of the harbor.

FEMA is issuing new flood maps for portions of the East Coast. Protecting lives and property is paramount for the agency.

Portland officials, however, argued that reclassification of Portland Harbor isn't warranted and that FEMA must take into account the important economic roles played by the harbor and other urban harbors on the coast.

In April, Littell and Portland Fire Chief Fred LaMontagne in went to Washington, D.C., for meetings with FEMA officials.

The city's argument prevailed, and FEMA largely reversed its position. However, FEMA wanted to keep one part of the harbor -- the end of the city-owned Maine State Pier -- in the flood zone because of high wave action.

City and FEMA officials have been discussing what to do about the Maine State Pier. That decision is expected to become public today.

The agreement has produced a new flood map that reflects actual risk, good science and effective collaboration, said Kevin Kelley, spokesman for U.S. Sen. [Susan Collins](#), R-Maine.

"Senator Collins believes the agreement (reached by) the City of Portland and FEMA is effective, and she is pleased to have worked to reach this outcome," Kelley said.

In September, FEMA agreed to delay the remapping of Portland Harbor after Collins discussed the remapping effort during the confirmation hearing of Richard Serino to be FEMA's deputy administrator.

Collins is the ranking Republican on the Senate Homeland Security Committee, which oversees FEMA.

During the hearing, Collins said litigation-style appeals are not a substitute for the cooperation that FEMA should be fostering with state and local officials when working on initiatives such as creating new flood maps.

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Portland officials pleased with FEMA agreement on flood maps

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Portland officials at a press conference today at Union Wharf said they are pleased with the decision by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to keep most of Portland Harbor from being classified as a high-risk flood zone.

Penny St. Louis Littell, director of the city's Planning and Urban Development Department, said that the only part of the harbor that will be included in the high-risk "V-zone" will be a 25-foot wide strip along the northeast edge of the city-owned Maine State Pier. The inclusion of a small portion of the pier won't affect the city's ability to develop it, she said.

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