

SENATE No. 547

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

SPECIAL REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS ON ITS SURVEY AND IN- VESTIGATION OF THE DAMAGE DONE TO PLUM ISLAND IN THE TOWN OF NEWBURY AND THE CITY OF NEWBURYPORT.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS,
100 NASHUA STREET, BOSTON, March 14, 1952.

*To the Honorable Senate and the House of Representatives of the Common-
wealth of Massachusetts.*

In accordance with the provisions of chapter 61, Resolves of 1951, the Department of Public Works submits its report on its survey and investigation of the damage done to Plum Island in the town of Newbury and the city of Newburyport, as a result of recent storms.

Chapter 61, Resolves of 1951, provides as follows:

Resolved, That the department of public works, acting through its division of waterways, shall proceed to make a survey and investigation of the damage done to Plum Island in the town of Newbury and the city of Newburyport as a result of recent storms. In carrying out said study and investigation the department shall make a survey and study of the shores of Plum Island in the town of Newbury and the city of Newburyport with a view to devising effective means of preventing further erosion of these shores by the waves and currents. As an aid to carrying out said study and investigation, the commissioner of public works is authorized to make formal application to the United States, Department of the Army, for a study by the Beach Erosion Board of said shores of the commonwealth, particularly the shores of Plum island in the town of Newbury and the city of Newburyport, for the purposes of this resolve, and the department of public

works is hereby authorized to co-operate in such study. Said department may expend for the purposes of this resolve such sums as may be appropriated therefor, not exceeding a total of fifteen thousand dollars, from which it may, for the purpose of the study by the Beach Erosion Board when such study is agreed upon and becomes effective, pay to the United States an amount equal to the amount to be allotted by the United States, but in no event to exceed five thousand dollars. Said department shall report to the general court the results of its survey and investigation and its recommendations, if any, as to methods for preventing storm damage to Plum Island and improving said island, together with estimates of costs and draft of legislation necessary to carry such recommendations into effect, by filing the same with the clerk of the senate not later than the first Wednesday of December in the current year.

This resolve was approved on August 8, 1951, and it limited the expenditure of such funds as may be appropriated, not to exceed \$15,000.

Subsequently, an appropriation was made in Item No. 2220-24, in the appropriation act, chapter 806, Acts of 1951, approved November 17, 1951, providing for an amount of \$15,000.

Resolve 61, authorizing this investigation, required that the Department shall file its report on the first Wednesday of December, 1951.

The proposed investigation would necessitate the making of surveys of the Plum Island shore, and the storm damage done, and other data that must be obtained to provide an adequate basis for recommendations as to what structures or measures should be carried out to prevent further damage.

Also, this resolve authorized the Department to make an agreement with the Beach Erosion Board, U. S. Engineers War Department, to assist in this investigation, and the Department was authorized to co-operate with that Board in this study.

Consequently, on November 16, 1951, the Department filed an application with the U. S. Engineers Department for the assistance of that Beach Erosion Board. It is understood that the Department's application, originally sent to the Division Engineer, New England Division,

U. S. Engineers at Boston, has been sent by him to the Chief of Engineers at Washington, D. C., for such action as he may take. To date no reply has been received.

Particular attention is called to the circumstances in this matter, namely:

1. No funds were available for this study until November 17, 1951.

2. According to Chapter 61, the Department was obliged to file a report on December 5, 1951. Such a report was filed by the Department and indicated that further time was necessary for the investigation.

3. The brief interval between November 17 and December 5 did not permit the Department to get under way for studying a project of such magnitude.

4. Also, the December 5 date for filing a report automatically prevented any further expenditures by this Department.

5. The report filed by the Department was considered by the General Court, and on January 14, 1952, an order was adopted by both the Senate and the House of Representatives granting an extension of time to March 14, 1952. Thereupon the Department started to make surveys of the Plum Island area involved in this study. Although the survey parties have been able to make shore line surveys and get topographic data, the storms and winter conditions have delayed this work so that only partial survey data has been obtained to date.

The Department, therefore, in conforming to the order of January 14, finds it necessary to report that conditions have permitted the accomplishment of only a very small part of the study and data necessary for this investigation.

The magnitude of this project will require a great deal more time to get adequate data to determine the real causes of the damages, and the off-shore channels and currents and other factors that must be well understood before a final design can be made for any type of protection.

The Department is cognizant of the serious plight of the people whose properties are threatened and possible

damage to the highway in this location, but realizes also that an incomplete analysis of the causes will not assure the permanence of adequate measures for the prevention of further storm damage.

Consequently the Department respectfully recommends that the date for filing its report be not later than the first Wednesday in December, 1952.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.

PHILIP H. KITFIELD,
Acting Commissioner.

BENJAMIN H. GROUT,
FRANCIS V. MATERA,
Associate Commissioners.