

Hooksett Banner Article

Larsen supports flood study

Senate President Sylvia Larsen, D-Concord, sent a letter supporting a comprehensive federal study of the Suncook River floodplain due to problems that developed after the river changed course last year.

The change in the river's course in Epsom, triggered by the May 2006 flood, has dramatically increased the amount of sediment flowing downstream into Pembroke and Allenstown. According to a preliminary assessment by a hydrogeologist, "(t)he large volume of sediment introduced downstream is expected to decrease channel depth and increase the frequency of overbank flooding," wrote Chad Wittkop, of the New Hampshire Geological Survey, in June of last year.

Larsen's constituent Tom Baumeister, who lives about four miles downstream from where the river changed course, said that's exactly what happened -- the erosion and silt deposits made this year's floods worse, once again driving him from his home.

Last year, Epsom officials applied for and received a federal grant to study whether to try to restore the river to its old course or accept the new channel. This latest study would go further by looking at the impact on the entire floodplain. Larsen wrote today to urge that the state Department of Environmental Services application be funded.

In her letter to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Larsen asked that U.S. Geological Survey grant money be approved and sufficient to allow a comprehensive study of the Suncook River floodplain.

"The designation of such funding is imperative to the successful efforts of New Hampshire DES and the U.S. Geological Survey to conduct an appropriately expansive study of that riparian region, including an analysis of sediment transport and the development of flood recovery mapping," she wrote.

"It is my hope that a complete and all-encompassing study will help promote solutions that will prevent further loss of property and promote security for all the residents living along the Suncook River," Larsen said.