



TO: Sue McCormick, Chief at NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation

DATE: 11.28.18

RE: Montauk Point Lighthouse Revetment Project

Dear Ms. McCormick,

Surfrider Foundation represents ~300 members in Eastern Long Island, and is writing with sincere concern about the “Montauk Point Lighthouse Revetment Project.” This project inappropriately directs needed coastal erosion funds towards a low priority and arguably unneeded project. Additionally, the project will negatively impact all user groups who frequent this area during construction for an extended amount of time.

The first question we would like to pose is, is it really needed?

This project has been under discussion for almost 20 years. Five previous projects have progressively shored up the coast to the extent that Greg Donohue, the Director of Erosion Control for the Montauk Historical Society, stated that the current Lighthouse Revetment withstood Hurricane Sandy without losing any soil. It wasn’t until Hurricane Sandy Post-storm funding became available that the Army Corps and the Montauk Historical Society made this project a priority. Surfrider Foundation requests to see proof via side scan sonar to prove that the existing revetment around the lighthouse is damaged and indeed needs to be added to.

Were Other Alternatives Explored?

The Army Corps of Engineers has repeatedly dismissed the idea of moving the Lighthouse, citing its construction material, age, elevation difference and cost – but provide no backup to this claim. So, Surfrider Foundation commissioned a study in 2016 to discover whether or not the lighthouse can technically be moved (whole study attached). The study showed that although it is physically feasible to move the lighthouse, a number of things must happen in order to make that the favorable option for our community: 1) Relocation has to be shown to be a technically, economically/ fiscally, environmentally and culturally viable management alternative for the long-term preservation of the Montauk Light Station, 2) The Montauk Historical Society and NY State Historic Preservation Office must be willing to acknowledge that the benefits and costs associated with relocation are preferable to a revetment over the long run and 3) The US Army Corps of Engineers must assess the true long-term economic, environmental and social benefits associated with relocation. Surfrider Foundation urges the Army Corps of Engineers, the Montauk Historical Society, and the New York State Historic Preservation Office to change the narrative from one of “short-term protection of the Montauk Light Station through brute force engineering” to one of “long-term preservation through relocation.” Since many other lighthouses have been relocated due to coastal erosion, this seems a favorable long-term solution.



Re-allocate Funds Toward The Downtown Business District Where Real Damage Occurs With Each Storm.

Earlier this year, one word that was repeated over and over again during the East Hampton Hamlet Study of Montauk was “retreat.” The hired planning consultants made it clear to East Hampton town that “it’s necessary to increase resiliency, with **strategic retreat** from areas that are going to be wiped out anyway,” when speaking about downtown Montauk. [Read more about this hamlet study here.](#) Montauk residents are still licking their wounds created by the Downtown Montauk Army Corps of Engineers project, which ultimately accelerated erosion on that strip of beach, restricted/ continues to restrict beach access during large storms, wasted money planting straight lines of dune grass which will ultimately die when its roots reach the sand bags, and altered the aesthetic of a culturally and recreationally significant area. The Army Corps of Engineers Downtown Montauk project was a stop-gap solution to a serious longer- term problem driven by sea-level rise. The long-awaited FIMP project will still fall far short of providing a solution. Projections show that a Sandy-like storm hitting Montauk directly, would over-wash the downtown business district and cause ocean-to-sound breaches in at least two locations. This would cause devastating personal, business, property and environmental losses. The cost of these losses is MUCH greater than the risk to the private business operation at Montauk Point. Surfrider Foundation would strongly suggest re-allocating funding to Downtown Montauk to pick up the pieces that the Army Corps has previously left.

Surfrider Foundation respectfully request that you re-evaluate the need for this project in its entirety.

Sincerely,

Surfrider Foundation, Eastern Long Island Chapter

Protecting Ocean, Waves, and Beaches from the Moriches Inlet to Montauk

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