



Bluff Erosion Challenges Downeast Maine

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Machias – September 19, 2025

About one-third of Maine's 5,408-mile coastline are bluffs, and prone to erosion. Communities along Washington County's coasts are experiencing bluff erosion from both powerful winter storms, and intense summer rains.

While bluff erosion is natural, for the landowners, it can be devastating. However, strategies which harness natural forces can slow bluff erosion. Using them, landowners can create healthy, natural shorelines responsive to rising sea levels and intense storms.

Strategy One: Plant deep rooted natives. Plant roots hold soil together by creating a natural net. Trees with deep, tangled root systems help hold bluffs together. Dense shrubs and grasses protect against surface erosion.

Strategy Two: Control water on the upland. Rainwater run-off on the top of a bluff can soak the soil causing banks to slump. Landowners can plant trees, install drains, swales, and water gardens to keep rainwater away from bluffs.

Strategy Three: Protect the bluff toe: The base of a bluff is often raked by waves and currents during storms. While rock cladding or 'hardening' shorelines has historically been the 'go to' approach, placing rocks in front of an eroding bluff comes with its own problems. Hardening shorelines is expensive, can cause heightened erosion on neighboring properties and often fails. Placed on soft mud, revetments washout from underneath, meanwhile water from the upland can wash soil right through large rocks. Instead, cobble berms, and upslope plantings can be combined. On steep slopes, hardening with rocks can be paired with terraces to create a more stable incline and room for native plants to thrive.

To assist landowners managing bluffs, Sunrise County Economic Council and the Maine Coastal Program will host a Resilient Shoreline Workshop in Machias on October 27th at 5:30 pm at the Lee-Pellon Center.

The free workshop will bring coastal geologists, scientists, state agency permit reviewers, and local contractors to help attendees understand shoreline erosion management. At the end of the

workshop, attendees have the option to stay for free practitioner office-hours to receive 15-minute shoreline assessments from experts and local practitioners.

This workshop is aimed at homeowners, property owners, property managers, municipal leaders, and real estate agents.

Light dinner will be provided.

To register, please visit <https://bit.ly/shorelineworkshop> or contact Tanya Rucosky via email (trucosky@sunrisecounty.org) or phone 207-255-0983.

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