

# Getting back the heavily storm-damaged beach

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A nearly weeklong assault of abnormally high tides and pounding surf at the Jersey Shore has caused severe beach erosion in southern Beach Haven, allowing the ocean to lap under condominiums and a home on pilings and causing a sewer line to break, officials said.

"The rest of our beaches in Beach Haven, they survived pretty well," said William E. Tromm III, borough emergency management coordinator.

"It was just that one section -- that's the worst I've ever seen," he said, referring to Merivale and Leeward avenues.

The ocean also left 10- to 12-foot high cliffs on the beach within about 20 feet of about four homes at 42nd, 43rd, 46th and 47th streets in Long Beach Township, Commissioner Robert A. Palmer said yesterday.

"There's no (imminent) danger . . . but obviously, they want to get the sand back there ASAP," Palmer said.

Since Tuesday, onshore winds, elevated tides and the sea have left some areas of the Jersey Shore extremely vulnerable, officials said. And there is a long way to go in the fall-winter storm season.

The large ocean swells will continue through today, bringing "a continuing threat of beach erosion," according to the National Weather Service's Mount Holly office Web site.

Minor tidal flooding was expected around the times of high tide last night and today, the weather service said. Too soon to save house

In Beach Haven, Mayor Deborah C. Whitcraft said beaches in the area of Merivale and Leeward avenues sustained severe erosion.

According to Tromm's report on "high tide damage," a "washout" was observed under a home at Merivale Avenue and at condominiums at Leeward Avenue Sunday morning. The house is a summer home and its owners were notified about the damage, Tromm said.

"With current conditions, it's just a little early to get up there," Tromm said, explaining that the wind has to change to a northwest direction before workers can attempt to save the Merivale Avenue house.

Whitcraft said the buildings are on pilings and there's "no actual fear of the structures themselves collapsing because . . . we're going to shore up that area."

"We're going to try to get sand brought in," she said. "But unfortunately, in all probability, it's going to all wash out again, which nature tends to do."

A sewer line at Merivale also was "broken off" later that day, the report says. Tromm said the sewer line has been capped.

Philadelphia resident Richard Thomson came to Beach Haven yesterday to see if his summer house had sustained any damage from nature's onslaught.



STAFF PHOTOS: STEVE SCHOLFIELD

Severely eroded dunes, affected by last week's storms, left a home (above) in Long Beach Township sitting precariously on a cliff. Heavy equipment operator Bob Parker (below) is among those working hard to rebuild those dunes.



"This is the price of living on a barrier island," Thomson said. "I've been here for 30 years. I have a place on Kentford Avenue. The island lies northeast, so it gets the brunt of these storms."

Thomson said his family purchased land in Beach Haven after the March 1962 nor'easter devastated Long Beach Island and land was cheap to come by. Those like his family know there are consequences with living in paradise, he said.

Ed Kohlmeir, a Realtor for Newbern Realty Co., was on the beach yesterday photographing the erosion near Merivale Avenue.

"You can't beat Mother Nature," Kohlmeir said, shouting over the howling wind. Some 'uncommon' erosion

In Long Beach Township, Palmer said there was minor erosion in a couple of spots, including 42nd, 43rd, 46th and 47th streets, which he dubbed "fairly uncommon."

Dan Tusa, 20, of Burlington Township, and Mary Sheeran, 20, of Woodland Township, two students at Burlington County College, came out with a camera to take pictures of the erosion for a photography class.

"It's crazy, it just drops right off," said Tusa, as he stood on the shore at Long Beach Township's 43rd Street and gazed east over an ocean that had seemed to reclaim the beach yesterday.

It was his first visit to Long Beach Island.

"I've never seen a beach like this before," Sheeran said.

In Harvey Cedars, Mayor Jonathan Oldham said the beaches were "chopped up" and vulnerable.

Meanwhile, Elbert E. Husted III, a Mantoloking borough councilman who lives on the ocean and heads the borough's beach and dune program, said beach erosion has worsened there since Friday.

"You better wear your waders" if you want to walk on the beach at high tide, Husted said. Beaches in Mantoloking and Bay Head sustained severe erosion during a nor'easter last December.

In Bay Head, however, the beach is "lovely and wide," with "no signs of overt erosion whatsoever," said D'Arcy Rohan Green, who lives near the ocean and is the borough's dune inspector.

"We were really pounded last week," Rohan Green said. "We were, I think, just lucky in the end not being beaten up too badly."