

Beach-restoring battle splits island residents

Some sign easements; others holding out

Posted by the Asbury Park Press on 01/25/06

BY JOE ZEDALIS
MANAHAWKIN BUREAU

Dueling Long Beach Island residents have drawn their lines in the sand as tension escalates over a beach replenishment proposal.

On one side are oceanfront property owners led by June and Michael Logan, the most vocal of the plan's opponents. They are inviting people concerned about the project to a meeting with a lawyer who recently won a case in Ocean City in which property owners challenged the planned height of rebuilt dunes.

On the other side are the state Department of Environmental Protection, the plan's chief proponent, and the Army Corps of Engineers, which will do the work. They are supported by some taxpayers who believe beach replenishment is the only way to protect the island from a severe storm.

The crux of the dispute is not the idea of beach replenishment but the public access — or possible public access — that accompanies it. David Rosenblatt, project manager for the state Department of Environmental Protection, said the DEP will not yield on its demand for public access points, parking and restrooms every quarter-mile on the 17-mile island.

"We don't want to end up with Porta-Potties in front of our homes," June Logan said.

The weapons Logan's group holds are easements the government needs to add sand to beaches and create access paths and parking. The couple has sent an e-mail to property owners urging them not to sign the easements.

"If we sign the easement, we sign over our property, with no restrictions, for perpetuity. There are simply no limits. They are going to have to pay us for the right to be on our property," June Logan said.

Of the 131 property owners reported to have signed easements to date, none has been paid, authorities have said.

The meeting will be with lawyer Kenneth Porro of Lyndhurst at 2 p.m. Feb. 12 at the Holiday Inn on Route 72 in Stafford. Opponents hope to learn how to scuttle or drastically modify the plan.

DEP rebuts argument

Rosenblatt, however, said the easements do not do what the opponents think but are limited to the beach and dune restoration and for public access.

"The state or the municipality never take control of the property if an easement is signed," he said. "The easement is specific about what can be done on the property."

State Sen. Leonard T. Connors Jr., R-Ocean, who is also mayor of Surf City, is a proponent of both beach replenishment and public access. But he said the Department of Environmental Protection will be at fault if the beach restoration project falls through because of its insistence that access and parking have to be all worked out before sand pumping can begin.

"I told David Rosenblatt if we lose the \$5 million for the start of this project, the DEP is going to be lambasted, and I am going to be the one teeing up," Connors said.

Connors said he is waiting for a report from the Surf City appraiser to see how much it would cost the borough to purchase property east of the bulkhead line, which is not buildable under state and federal law.

"We will use eminent domain even though I don't like it," Connors said. "But if we take the land, it may come back and prevent a property owner from adding on or rebuilding because of lot to home proportions. In many cases it would just be easier if property owners just signed off on the easements."

Some easements signed

All down the island, municipalities are struggling to get the necessary easements to begin work in late spring. Since there are public funds involved, all easements must be obtained.

Harvey Cedars has gotten 22 of its 83 easements signed, Ship Bottom only 5 of 52, Beach Haven 47 of 157, Surf City 5 of 24 and Long Beach Township 47 out of 600. Work is scheduled to begin in Ship Bottom and Surf City this summer.

"We want to save the character of Long Beach Island," June Logan said. "We could have Porta-Potties in front of our homes or a boardwalk behind it. No one is telling us anything."

Beach Haven Mayor Deborah C. Whitcraft said the need for eminent domain to get onto properties where owners refuse to grant easements is going to derail the project.

"We have the solicitor in Long Beach Township (Richard Shackelton) telling the people in that township to sign the easement but telling people he represents in Beach Haven not to sign the easement," Whitcraft said.

Shackelton could not be reached for comment.

"Anyone who doesn't sign the easement should be taxed and bear the financial cost of replenishment themselves," Whitcraft said.

Daina Dale, the borough clerk in Harvey Cedars, said the costs for purchasing easements could be passed on to the taxpayers.

"The commissioners believe they can get all the easements," Dale said. "But the costs (if eminent domain is necessary) could well come out of their taxes."

Dune height an issue

Beside the easements, oceanfront homeowners are most concerned about the 22-foot height above the water line that rebuilt dunes will rise to, and the potential loss of ocean views and property values.

Thomas Herrington, a coastal engineer and a professor at Stevens Institute of Technology, said that most dunes on LBI already rise 12 to 14 feet above the flat beach.

"The recreational value in the size of the flat beach is immeasurable," Herrington, a replenishment advocate, said.

Long Beach Township Commissioner Robert Palmer said many of the dunes are already 20 or 22 feet high.

Herrington noted that beach fills of a nature similar to the one planned on LBI have been successful.

"Beaches in Cape May were filled in 1989-90 and have been renourished three or four times," Herrington said. "In Ocean City, there are places where the beach was 100 feet wide, and it has grown to 200 feet wide since the fill."

Logan, however, noted that in Ventnor, much of the pumped-on sand has since been washed away toward Longport and Margate.

Herrington said the Corps of Engineers has determined the fill where sand is pumped in from

offshore is the most cost-effective way to protect businesses and homes from a 100-year storm.

"There are areas of Long Beach Island that are so vulnerable right now, a major storm like the one in 1992 could breach the island," Herrington warned.

Noreen Bodman, executive director of the New Jersey Shore Partnership, a pro-beach-fill organization, said opponents are simply not getting the right information.

"Our organization would be happy to facilitate a meeting with Dr. Herrington to meet with residents until they fully understand the process and the associated pros and cons," she said.

"After the last two hurricane seasons, it is apparent that beach replenishment is not only good for the economy, it is a resourced of preparedness and the mitigation of damages," Bodman said.

Copyright © 2006 Asbury Park Press. All rights reserved.

Use of this site signifies your agreement to the [Terms of Service](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). (Updated June 7, 2005) Site design by [Asbury Park Press](#) / [Contact us](#)