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Erosion puts Beach Haven homes right on the water

By *BERNARD VAUGHAN* Staff Writer, (609) 978-2012

LONG BEACH ISLAND - Long Beach Township beaches have largely recovered but a significant amount of work remains to be done in southern Beach Haven after storms last week caused severe beach erosion.

"This is the worst erosion I've seen in 10 years," said Mike King, assistant superintendent of the Beach Haven Public Works Department.

King and John Keene, of Owen-Little and Associates Engineering, surveyed damage to Merivale Street on Friday. King said the county is bringing in gravel that will then be blacktopped to restore the 15 feet of the street damaged by the erosion.

King said the township was procuring the necessary Department of Environmental permits, and that the road should be fixed early next week.

Once again, the most damage was done to the beaches in the Merivale and Leeward Avenues area.

"It's a constant problem with Merivale and Leeward - it has been for years - and this year it's particularly bad," said Borough Commissioner George Allen. "You'd have to ask Mother Nature why. It's the way the northeastern winds come down there."

Allen said the borough was pushing sand away from the beach and toward the street and damaged area in the hope of reforming a natural dune.

On Friday, the tide was still flowing steadily around the bulkhead and stilts of 214 and 211 Leeward, respectively. The two properties bore the brunt last week's storms. Allen said that before the storm, there were 150 to 200 yards of beach in front of the properties.

Jay Deyonker of Forked River is the owner of a condominium at 214 Leeward Ave. He said he felt the winds for a few days in Forked River but didn't make it over to Beach Haven until Saturday.

"I was pretty taken aback," Deyonker said. Deyonker has had the summer home for seven years, and he said he's seen four or five other bad northeasters. "This is the worst erosion I've seen yet. We're on piling though, so we're pretty safe."

Deyonker said the property's bulkhead - which was replaced last year - was damaged again. The beach eroded so much, Deyonker said, that water seeped beneath the bulkhead, loosening the boards. He said he and his fellow condo owners were still evaluating the cost of repairs to the bulkhead.

"We have four people who get along very much, thank God," Deyonker said of his neighbors.

John Jones, superintendent of Public Works in Long Beach Township, said the storm caused some 10-foot-plus cliffs near homes between blocks 42 and 47.

"I had my bulldozers out all week and we're pretty much back in good shape," Jones said.

Jones said this storm didn't match up that well in intensity to previous storms.

"This is like the hamburger to the sirloin compared to years past," Jones said. "We still have all winter to go, but right now I'm pretty happy."

To e-mail Bernard Vaughan at The Press:

BVaughan@pressofac.com