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Beaches on LBI will get new sand

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BY ERIK LARSEN
MANAHAWKIN BUREAU

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has approved a project cooperation agreement between the federal government and the state that clears the way for the start of shoring up 17 miles of oceanfront on Long Beach Island, Rep. H. James Saxton, R-N.J., announced Wednesday.

"This is yet another big step for the long-term plan to repair and protect LBI beaches, homes, businesses and public property," Saxton said. "Without the (agreement), the project cannot advance. I expect a formal signing . . . by the parties in the next few weeks. The LBI project should go to bid soon after that. Work — actually moving of sand — could begin along some parts of the island as early as year's end."

Saxton met with Lt. Gen. Carl A. Strock at the congressman's Washington office to express his appreciation for the efforts of the Army corps and its Philadelphia District to push the project ahead, said Jeff Sagnip Hollendonner, a spokesman for Saxton.



(PRESS FILE PHOTO)
Beach erosion in Long Beach Township is clearly seen after a storm in March.



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In May, \$5 million was earmarked in the coming 2006 federal budget for beach replenishment funding on Long Beach Island under "storm protection funds."

Surf City Mayor Leonard T. Connors Jr., who is also a state senator, said now it's up to all six municipalities on the island to get their acts together to make sure all the necessary public easements are in place for the project to move forward.



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The federal program requires the state to add \$500,000 to the federal government's \$1 million, and to contribute 35 percent of the project's total \$159 million cost over 50 years.

According to Saxton's office, the beach replenishment project would:

Include a 125-foot-wide beach berm and a sand dune 30 feet wide.

Incorporate 347 acres of planted dune grasses and 540,000 feet of sand fencing.

Raise the beach 8 feet above sea level, and dunes an additional 14 feet, for a total height of 22 feet.

Replace 7.4 million cubic yards of sand fill during initial construction.

Provide maintenance work about every seven years over a 50-year period.

As a condition of Long Beach Township's participation, the state Department of Environmental Protection has wanted the town to provide better public access to its beaches in North Beach and Loveladies, sections of Long Beach Township boasting palatial waterfront estates.

Previously, Saxton's office said the project could still move ahead elsewhere on the island even with those access issues unresolved.

"Congressman Saxton has performed a miracle, an absolute miracle," Connors said.

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