

Big bucks for beaches

Feds kick in \$2.5M more for LBI rebuilding project

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MANAHAWKIN BUREAU

New Jersey found out it will get another \$2.5 million in federal funding for beach construction on Long Beach Island in 2007, all the while wondering if the \$5 million appropriated for this year will be used.

Congressman H. James Saxton, R-N.J., announced the \$2.5 million was included in the 2007 Energy and Water Development budget. Saxton spokesman Jeff Sagnip Hollendonner said it was the first time construction funding was included in a presidential budget.

David Rosenblatt, the state Department of Environmental Protection project manager for the LBI replenishment project, admitted the DEP will need to simplify easement language or risk having local municipalities spend millions on condemnation proceedings.

Bill Knarre, the president of the Brant Beach Homeowners Association in Long Beach Township, estimated condemnation proceedings and property purchases so the beach fill can begin would be \$125,000 per property. Long Beach Township needs 600 easements.

"There is currently a re-education process under way," Rosenblatt said. "We held public hearings for this project in the 1990s. We neglected to account for change over in property ownership and changes in administrations.

"When we met with the public in December we considered it the end of the public process; too many considered it the beginning of the public process. That was clearly a mistake.

"I believe that municipalities, working with the DEP, can rectify the situation," he said.

Long Beach Township Mayor DiAnne C. Gove is arranging more intimate meetings with the DEP and oceanfront property owners.

On Tuesday, Leonard T. Connors Jr., Surf City mayor and a state senator, said he asked the borough engineer to create a plot plan for each property owner to show where their property ends and state property, east of the bulkhead line, begins.

"I want it to be explained in plain language," Connors said. "I think most homeowners don't even know where the bulkhead line is. In Surf City, most of the bulkhead line is under the dune and people can't walk on the dune anyway."

Knarre said most oceanfront property owners have no problem with sand renourishment.

"People are afraid of the unknown that can be done for perpetuity," he said. "All the legal mumbo jumbo in the easement scared people right off the bat. Common sense says you don't sign something that leaves so much of the unknown out there forever."

Hollendonner said Saxton was able to get the \$2.5 million because of replenishment already done on LBI in Harvey Cedars.

"That's why starting this phase of the project is so important," he said. "Future funding may be at stake if work doesn't begin this summer."

Rosenblatt, however, was more certain the pumping of sand would begin.

"I am optimistic that in the end we will secure most of the necessary easements," he said. "I am

optimistic there will be construction on LBI this summer."

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