

Gritty determination

Long Beach Twp. commissioner uses erosion to drive home need for replenishment project

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— Township Commissioner Robert Palmer thinks erosion that portions of Long Beach Island suffered Tuesday night should be a wake-up call to oceanfront-property owners.

Palmer said the erosion should convince oceanfront homeowners to sign easements required by the state and federal governments for the island's beach-replenishment project. The Army Corps of Engineers and Department of Environmental Protection need the easements for access to the beach to complete the work.

On Wednesday, Palmer, director of Long Beach Township's Department of Public Works, was out with repair crews in front of one property in the township's Brant Beach section where tides had washed out sand all the way up to the bulkhead just in front of and below the home.

"If they didn't have a bulkhead under there, that water would probably be all the way to that spiral staircase," Palmer said, pointing to a staircase that is part of the home itself.

The damage was particularly striking, according to Palmer, because it was mainly the result of unusually high tides and did not occur in very high winds or stormy conditions. In addition to Brant Beach, he said the township's North Beach section also suffered significant damage.

Without the beach-replenishment project, Palmer said damage like that caused Tuesday night would become more frequent and more severe.

Thus far, only a small number of beachfront homeowners in the township and other island municipalities have signed the easements.

"If I had an oceanfront home in this section, I'd be knocking somebody down to sign the document," Palmer said.

Many property owners have questioned why the easements are necessary. And state requirements that island municipalities have multiple public access points to the beach and install numerous public restroom facilities have also caused controversy on the island.

Palmer said he understood the concerns, but insists that the project is badly needed.

"I'm getting some letters from people that say 'I'm never signing the document,' and these people should really open their mind," he said.

The Township Commission is expected to approve \$150,000 to pay for the emergency repairs to Brant Beach and North Beach already under way at its meeting Friday, according to Palmer.