

Storm gives beaches in Cape May County another hard beating

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A winter storm rolls into town and piles of sand roll out.

"I'm getting used to it now, unfortunately," North Wild-wood Beach Patrol Chief Tony Cavalier said Monday as he and other officials in Cape May County towns evaluated the aftermath of this weekend's snowstorm.

Cavalier keeps a watchful eye on the city beaches where he spends so much time, and this weekend he watched as more of the beach disappeared, thanks to the weekend's northeaster and the accompanying beach erosion.

"The beach is getting smaller with every storm," he said.

Water that once stayed 40 yards from Sportland Pier at 24th Avenue now comes under the pier at high tide.

The Beach Patrol headquarters at 15th Avenue has to be protected by concrete barriers that try to keep the ocean at bay.

North Wildwood City Council President Patrick Rosenello and other local officials are waiting anxiously for a beach-replenishment project to restore some of what has been lost.

"It's not getting any better," he said.

Rosenello said the city expects to hold a sort of pre-construction meeting March 8 with the state Department of Environmental Protection to discuss the project and the Coastal Area Facilities Review Act, or CAFRA, permits needed.

At that point, the town will have better idea of the time frame for the \$9 million project, which will likely not begin until at least the latter part of the summer or later.

Meanwhile, Cavalier has a small glimmer of hope. Each May and June, he said, the winds turn around sending back some of the sand already lost. "We will recover some," he said.

Farther south, Cape May suffered some beach erosion from the storm, especially at Poverty Beach and The Cove Beach, and also some flooding in several areas of town, Mayor Jerry Inderwies Sr said.

"Beach erosion is moderate. We always fare pretty well with a northeast storm because we face south. Poverty Beach is gone but that will come back with the spring tides," Inderwies said.

The southern winds of spring should bring sand back ashore at Poverty and The Cove. Inderwies, who headed the city's Public Works Department before becoming mayor, has seen it happen before.

"The sands go and the sands come back," he said.

The city also had flooding on Yacht Avenue and on Cape Island Creek in the area of Bank, Elmira and Venice streets.

"We're looking to put in a pump station to reduce some of that," the mayor said.

The biggest problem in West Cape May was not flooding but downed power lines that closed sections of Stevens Street and West Drive, Mayor Pam Kaithern said.

"It was a pretty dangerous situation," Kaithern said.

A tree fell and snapped a utility pole. Power was still on when borough worker Dave Carrick discovered the problem at about 4:30 a.m. Sunday morning. Firefighters from West Cape May and the Cape May fire police were on scene for hours waiting for the electric company. Service was eventually restored.