

REPORT:

Officials prefer leaving Holgate refuge natural

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LONG BEACH TOWNSHIP — A 1999 joint report by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection states a new channel could develop in a section of the Holgate Wildlife Refuge if a breach is not repaired by some type of beach replenishment project.

"The most significant problem is the anticipated breach in the vicinity of the wash-over fan," the report states. "If a new inlet were to form in this area, the location may be much farther north than the previous historical formation of the Barnegat Inlet.

"The result may include a complete loss of 2.5 miles of coastal wetland, sandy beaches and scrub shrub habitats to erosion and establishment of a new inlet," the report added.

The report stated if nothing is done, property could be in danger.

"This could leave adjacent developed land more vulnerable to storm damage and a long-term erosion process," the report states. "Breaching of a similar area at Stone Harbor Point, New Jersey, 44

miles down the coast resulted in the complete loss of approximately 7,000 feet of coastal scrub and wetland habitat south of the terminal groin.

"Homes and land adjacent to the refuge in the community of Holgate may subsequently become more vulnerable to storm damage and beach erosion," the report stated.

Bill Hutson
motel owner

neers, said the Corps is in talks with the DEP about possibly doing some type of work at the refuge.

"We have heard from several residents about the concern they have," Brockey said. "We are talking to the state right now about what is going on."

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"U.S. Fish and Wildlife states it does not consider beach nourishment in line with the non-intervention plan in place for Holgate Unit of the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge," the report states. "Therefore, the Holgate Unit was also not included in the project."

Keith Watson, project manager for the Corps, said despite not being part of the project, area businesses are safe.

"At this point in time there is no danger to surrounding businesses," Watson said. "Right now, there are no plans on doing any type of fill-in project."

Lorry's Island End Motel owner Bill Hutson said area residents could be in danger in the coming years.

"If this does not get done, there could be a huge danger to the surrounding community," Hutson said. "This is an issue that many people really do not know about. If that gets washed away, there might be problems with the future of Beach Haven and other surrounding areas."

By not doing the project on

that section of the Island, tourism would be affected, Hutson said.

According to the joint federal and state report, Long Beach Island is an important part of the approximately \$80 billion in annual tourism dollars.

Hutson said if anything happens, it would cost area residents and businesses a lot of money.

"It would have a huge financial impact on the area," Hutson said.

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The refuge is a major part of the migratory pathway, according to the report. The birds that use the area include the mute swan, Canada goose, Atlantic brant, American black duck, green winged teal, piping plover and bald eagle, according to the report.

Federal officials claim in the report that the refuge is not eligible for any type of project because they want to keep it as natural as possible.



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