Our Readers Write

Army Corps' Plan Will Flood Tract

To The Editor:

Residentss in West Cape May and the county should be aware of the water projects that the Army Corps of Engineers has planned for South Cape May Meadow.

The corps is going to proceed with construction of these projects without public hearings.

The corps is going to construct an embankment behind homes in the Fow Tract.

This embankment or dam will be built from Sunset Boulevard to Cape Island Creek running parallel to First Avenue.

The area behind the dam will be flooded with salt water, which will change ecology of the meadow.

This meadow has been a fresh water wetland since 1927.

For the past 78 years, South Cape May Meadow has been one of the few fresh water meadows along the East Coast, and Atlantic Flyway.

Work is being done at the request of The Nature Conservancy which owns this property.

The Nature Conservancy is a non-profit organization that pays no federal taxes, and these projects will be financed by tax dollars.

In 1988, a similar proposal was made the county to provide a fresh water lake for migrating birds.

Residents strongly opposed this proposal.

The late Mayor Jack Vassar wrote a letter to the corps and freeholders vehemently opposing the construction of the embankment and lake.

A petition was submitted in 1988 by 57 borough residents opposing this project.

This project in 1988 was rejected by the state as too dangerous for residents here.

In order to flood the area behind the proposed embankment with salt water today, the corps is going to place a device on a flood control gate at Myrtle Avenue to hold the gate open, so that salt water at high tide will enter Cape Island Creek and flood the area behind the embankment with salt water.

In 1994, Cape May tried opening the Myrtle Flood Control Gate without a permit from the state.

As a result, Fow Tract experienced major flooding and many residents had to be evacuated by boat.

Some homes were seriously damaged and not totally covered by flood insurance, landscaping was completely destroyed by salt water.

A 1994 letter from DEP stated the flood gate must be closed and operated as designed, to open and close with ebb and flow of the tide.

Another water project planned for this year by the corps, is excavation of two, half-acre ponds. One to be located on Conservancy property and the other at the state park.

These ponds will be dammed by a weir with a series of boards that can be removed by Conservancy or state park personnel if the water level becomes too high in the pond.

Removal of one board will release approximately 1 million gallons of water into Cape Island Creek and will cause flooding here.

Residents who live on Sunset Boulevard from Broadway to Cape May Point as far as Fourth Avenue depend on the meadow for water drainage from this area.

Their drainage passes under Sunset Boulevard in a culvert and into the meadow.

If projects proposed by the corps are installed, and additional water is introduced into the meadow, there will be major flooding in West Cape May.

Projects are being constructed without an environmental impact study, since the meadow will change from a fresh water to salt water wetland.

No flood impact studies have been made to determine whether projects will cause flooding.

If you are concerned about how tax dollars are being spent, and environmental changes that will take place in South Cape May Meadow, as well as flooding, do something.

Contact freeholders and U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo in Mays Landing.

VINCENT PELLEGRINO
West Cape May

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By JAC

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By AL CAMPBE

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