

## **ANNOUNCING IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BEACH RESTORATION PROJECT!**

### **BASIC BACKGROUND AND STEPS TAKEN 3/10 TO 3/14**

- Our project engineer, Michael Dombrowski of MRD & Associates, completed the feasibility study and presented his findings to the SJPBAC on March 10<sup>th</sup>.
- The recommendation is for a “two-phase” approach.
- The SJPBAC unanimously passed a resolution supporting the recommendations of MRD & Associates for the phased approach and permitting of the initial beach project, or the first phase.
- County Administrator Don Butler presented MRD’s recommended beach project to the Board of County Commissioners at their regular March 14<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- The commission was asked to approve proceeding forward with the preparation of the permit application. The cost of this step was estimated at \$50,000, and Mr. Butler presented the commission with his proposed plan for covering these costs, which did not affect reserves or cash carry forward.
- In a unanimous vote of 4-0 (Mr. Barnes was absent due to a family emergency) the commission approved Mr. Butler’s proposal and request.

### **WHY PROCEED WITH THE PERMIT APPLICATION NOW?**

There are several important justifications for proceeding to permitting now, as outlined in the bullet points below.

- It allows the application to begin being reviewed by the various state and federal regulatory agencies, such as U.S. Fish & Wildlife. These reviews take anywhere from seven months to a year or more, and by getting the permit filed now, those reviews can move forward without unnecessary delay.
- It will advance the permit application so that the ECL, or erosion control line, can be set more quickly after the MSTUs are approved by the voters. Once the ECL is set, upland properties are protected in that should a major storm event occur, when the beach project is constructed, any lost lands will be restored to the ECL and then the new beach is constructed beyond that. This protects not only the properties, but the tax revenues they generate for Gulf County. (More information will be coming to you soon on the ECL and how that process works.)

- The further along the permit is, the sooner it will be available for review and bidding by the dredging companies. Being flexible in when we can construct could have a significant positive impact on the project's final contract cost.

### **DETAILS ON THE PROJECT WE'RE APPLYING TO PERMIT (WHAT WE'LL CALL THE "BEACH PROJECT" IN THE FUTURE)**

- Our beach project, or the first phase, will be from the State Park to about the middle of the rock revetment at Stump Hole.
- The project will perform just as well as the original design that combined this project with what we'll call Phase Two. The anticipated life cycle of the project is still 7.5 years prior to the first scheduled nourishment. This is well within the average in Florida for other projects, which ranges from 5 to 10 years.
- The project now carries an estimated price tag of approximately \$18 million (versus \$21.6 million to do the project all at once).
- Taking this approach allows the initial beach project to qualify for a higher percentage of state matching funds, in the range of 40% of the total project cost based on the eligibility from the primary beach access points currently under consideration. The addition of one secondary access point could increase the match to closer to 43%, or an additional \$710,000 in state funding.
- The need for groins or breakwaters is eliminated. This reduces the cost and also makes the permitting application less cumbersome. Additionally, it should reduce the cost of post-construction monitoring for turtle nesting and other environmental impact concerns.
- The northern portion of the revetment will be protected from storms. Additionally, the roadway to the north, which is vulnerable to storm damage now, will be protected.

### **WHY STOP IN THE MIDDLE OF STUMP HOLE WITH OUR BEACH PROJECT?**

It may sound odd to stop the project in the middle of the Stump Hole, but there's several very important reasons for the project to be designed this way.

- The proposed end point for our project is just south of the County beach driving access. South of that, the land is owned either by FDOT or Eglin Air Force Base (see the discussion of Phase Two below for why this is significant).

- The project will be “anchored” into the revetment at that spot and we won’t need structures (groins or breakwaters) to hold it in place.
- The reason we can eliminate the structures is the project ends before it reaches what’s called a “nodal point.” In plain English, that’s the place along the shoreline where the sand goes in a different direction and migrates south off the cape instead of north. As long as we stop our sand placement before that spot, we don’t need to put in a structure to keep the sand from drifting off to the south.

### **WHAT IS PHASE TWO AND WHAT WILL HAPPEN WITH IT?**

- MRD’s recommendations also included a separate section of the project that we are referring to as Phase Two. It would take the project from the middle of Stump Hole and place sand about 1500 feet further south.
- Additionally Phase Two will likely involve placement of structures (groins or breakwaters) south of the lighthouse, which is well into Eglin Air Force Base property.
- The County, the SJPBAC and MRD will continue to work with both FDOT and Eglin to pursue approval, funding, permitting and construction of this second phase.
- FDOT is conducting a study on the protection of C30 at Stump Hole. They will be provided with MRD’s recommendations and we will attend their meetings whenever possible to promote the extension of the beach restoration project. However, no specific timeline is known for FDOT’s review or what recommendations they will make.
- Eglin Air Force Base has met with members of the SJPBAC and expressed interest in studying beach restoration for their shoreline. Again, however, no estimated timeline is available for how long Eglin’s review will take and it is unknown what their conclusions will be.
- An Air Force Base has not participated in a beach restoration project in Florida to date that involved the actual shoreline. Even if we as a county were able and willing to fund the entire construction of Phase Two, we would not be able to construct on Eglin’s lands unless and until Eglin and the State of Florida came to an agreement on several very important issues.
- Should FDOT and/or Eglin choose to proceed with any or all of Phase Two of the project, the costs involved will not be borne on the local level. Negotiations on cost share can take place

between FDEP, FDOT, and Eglin without any adverse impact on our local cost share.

- By continuing to work with both FDOT and Eglin, we are leaving the door open for future construction of Phase Two but are not impeding the progress of our beach project by tying them together as one.