



IMPORTANT UPDATE – Second Mailing Moving ahead towards restoring the beach!

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St. Joseph Peninsula Beach Advisory Committee

Hello again from the St. Joseph Peninsula Beach Advisory Committee! A lot of exciting progress has been made since we last communicated with you. This brochure will bring you up to date on where we are now with the project, any changes since our last communication, a time line for the project going forward, and also includes our owners' survey form. A great deal has happened in just a few months, and we feel it has all been positive! The box below gives you an overview of what's new, as well as upcoming events you'll want to be aware of.

Please read the entire brochure before completing your survey form. Our first brochure is available for review at www.savethecape.com under the "library" tab.

IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS AND EVENTS

- Final project design and cost estimate has been received from our Coastal Engineer.
- Preparation of the Permit Application and its filing was approved by the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and is underway.
- The BOCC approved a 1% increase in the Bed Tax. An estimated \$116,000 in bed taxes will be applied to beach restoration in **just the first year alone.**
- Beach Access Points are being identified and finalized. The BOCC has approved plans for two of our primary access points.
- As a result of this progress with beach access and an expansion of State-owned lands in the project, the State is currently estimated to pay **over 46%** of the total project costs – and this number has the potential to increase even more.
- The MSTU referendum language, setting of the referendum vote, and a resolution affirming the MSTU caps have been approved by the BOCC.
- Accurate projections of Year One MSTU millage rates have been completed for all three MSTU classifications.
- Two town halls have been set to get more detailed information out to property owners.
- Once the MSTU votes have been completed, work on establishing the Erosion Control Line, or ECL, will begin.

What can we expect when our beach is restored?

The first picture below shows the dire condition of Navarre Beach's gulf front on March 17th, as the pipes were laid to begin the restoration. The second photo shows the dramatic difference made in a few weeks to their shoreline & the new protection provided to upland structures. The beach has gone from nonexistent to incredible! These photos were taken by Kenny Wilder, a professional photographer, who graciously permitted their use here. Kenny's website includes a photo gallery dedicated to their restoration project, as well as comments from residents, owners and visitors. Go to this web address to see, through Kenny's photographs, how a restoration project is actually being constructed: <http://www.pbase.com/kennywilder/startrestoration>

NAVARRE BEACH, MARCH 17, 2006



NAVARRE BEACH, APRIL 5, 2006



Both Photos Courtesy of Kenny Wilder – www.NavarreBeachPhotos.com

What's new in the project design?

The project design has been refined and runs from about the middle of the Stump Hole Revetment to approximately 1 mile into the state park. Significant facts about our project design include:

- The anticipated life cycle of the project is 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 initial plan appeared as though the project would likely include "groins" or "breakwaters." However, the need for these types of structures has been eliminated because Stump Hole will now serve as the "anchor" for the project. This reduces costs and also makes the permitting application process less cumbersome. Without structures, the cost of post-construction monitoring for turtle nesting and other environmental concerns should also be reduced.
- 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.
- The expansion of the project into the state park is a very recent development and has many positive impacts on our project. The longer a project is, the better it performs. Additionally, the State of Florida will pay 100% of the costs associated with this additional stretch of beach (just as they will for Rish Park). As a result, the overall State matching funds also increase approximately 3% without any action on our part!

Why doesn't the project extend past Stump Hole?

For an in-depth discussion of this topic, visit the library tab on our website at www.savethecape.com, but here are the major points:

- Some of the land from the middle of Stump Hole southward is owned by FDOT and some of it is owned by Eglin Air Force Base.
- To date, neither FDOT nor any air force base has participated in a Florida beach restoration project that involved the actual shoreline. It could take an extensive amount of time for the FDEP, FDOT, and Eglin to agree to the terms of the restoration in that area, and there's no guarantee either entity would choose to participate.
- Work will continue to be done to encourage expansion of the beach restoration into this area. We are leaving the door open for the future but are not impeding the progress of our beach project by including this segment in our initial permit application.
- If FDOT and/or Eglin choose to proceed with beach restoration in this segment, the cost will not be borne on the local level, but would be negotiated by FDEP, FDOT, and Eglin and would not have any adverse impact on our local cost share.

What is the Erosion Control Line (ECL)?

The erosion control line (ECL) is established in beach restoration projects to identify the upland limits of State ownership as required by Florida State Statute.

(Over 120 miles of Florida beaches now have an ECL.) Since the State of Florida holds all lands below Mean High Water in public trust for all to use, the location of the ECL is based on the location of the mean (or average) high water elevation.

Are my property rights protected?

Florida Statutes Section 161.201 (Preservation of Property Rights) was enacted to protect the upland riparian property owners' rights. The law says that there is no intention on the part of the State to take lands that it does not already hold. Further, there is no intention to deprive upland property owners of their constitutional use and enjoyment of their property. The law specifically declares that no activities shall be allowed seaward of an ECL that may be injurious to property owners; i.e., beach vendors, bathhouses, concession stands, etc.

WHAT DOES THE ECL MEAN TO THE GULF-FRONT PROPERTY OWNER?

- The best way to protect your property as a gulf-front owner is to support restoration of the beach and the establishment of an ECL.
- The Mean High Water line is where your rights end now. The MHWL established in conjunction with the permit application will become the ECL, which is where your property boundary will be fixed.
- The good news is that line won't keep advancing inland from erosion and storm damage at the rates it has since 1997 -- double the '73-'97 rates.
- Properties gain added protection from storms, and beachgoers will not be "intruding" on properties and structures -- they'll be enjoying and using the new, wider beach and shoreline!
- Once the ECL line is set, should we suffer further erosion damage from hurricanes prior to construction, properties will be protected by the ECL, and property boundaries will remain as they were established when the ECL is approved.

When will our ECL be established?

After the MSTU votes have been concluded, the engineering firm will begin the work necessary to determine the Mean High Water Line and submit the ECL documentation to the State. We will keep you updated through the website and the town hall meetings as more information on the ECL plans develop.

Once a beach is extended beyond the ECL, who has jurisdiction over it?

Gulf County will have jurisdiction over our restored beach and has the power to enforce ordinances governing the beaches and their use, just as they do now.

What is the project going to cost?

The final cost *estimates* from our project engineer, Michael Dombrowski, MRD Associates, were presented to the Gulf County Board of Commissioners on March 14th.

Based on these estimates, we have summarized the cost projections below; however, it is important to mention that **the final cost could be more or less, depending on the actual bids received by the dredging companies.** *Actual bids cannot be obtained until the project funding has been approved and the project will be permitted by both the State & Federal governments.* Therefore, a “buffer” has been included in the projections to provide room for some variance between the projections and the actual cost.

Projected Project Costs	
Estimated Project Cost	\$ 19,800,000
Estimated amount paid for by State	
Est. State cost share	6,164,271
Est. amount for Rish Park & SJP State Park (paid 100% by State)	<u>3,100,000</u>
Estimated total paid by State	\$ 9,264,271
Estimated local amount (\$19.8 million less \$9,264,271)	10,535,729
Plus inflation/project bid reserve (estimate)	<u>1,464,271</u>
Estimated “local” amount for projection purposes	\$12,000,000
<i>This is a projection only – actual costs will vary</i>	

Who will pay for the project?

As we mentioned in our last mailer, these types of projects generally include funding from several sources. The State of Florida will pay up to 50% of the project! ***In our case, it appears that we will receive anywhere from 40 to 50% in State funding*** (this includes both State matching funds & the cost for restoring both Rish Park & the SJP State Park)!

How much of the project cost will the State pay?

Significant progress has been made toward increasing public beach access points – **which is the key to State funding!**

Currently, the Gulf County Board of Commissioners has approved two primary access points (**which equate to approximately \$2.4 million in State funding**).

In addition, we are grateful that some individual homeowners have come forward to offer walkover, or secondary, access points! The County is working with these individuals to secure these accesses. We have included the beach access plan in our projections that appears to be viable at this time; however, additional locations will result in additional State participation!

Who will pay for the remaining share of the cost?

In our case, the remainder of the project cost will be paid for at the local level. The BOCC recently **increased the bed tax (or “tourist tax”) by 1%** so that 1 cent of all future bed tax revenue will go towards our project – which equates to approximately 5% of the projected “local” share of the cost. Obviously, this number should increase annually.

As is typical with most beach restoration projects, the remainder of the cost will be paid for by property owners in the project area through an MSTU, or Municipal Services Taxing Unit (provided that the registered voters in the project area “vote” to proceed with the project). *See more about the vote on the following page.* MSTUs are commonly used for these types of projects because the folks in the project area “benefit” more than the rest of the community.

Our homes and properties will be protected from the storm-surge damage commonly experienced with Ivan and Dennis. Also, as noted in the economic study, properties located in areas with managed beaches **normally enjoy increased property values after restoration!**

In addition, it’s important to note that once we have a managed beach, it becomes “public infrastructure” and qualifies for FEMA funding of up to 75% in the event of hurricane-related storm damage when designated as a federally declared disaster area.

Tell me more about the “MSTU.”

The MSTU, or special assessment tax, will be imposed on only those properties located in the project area and *can only be used to fund this specific project.* The cost of the project to be funded by the MSTU is typically spread over 5 to 7 years. The cost of repaying our bond will be spread over 7 years.

As currently proposed, there will be three separate MSTUs: one for gulf-front, one for gulf-interior, and one for bayside properties. The MSTUs will be graduated, with gulf-front properties paying the highest millage rate, gulf-interior paying at a lower rate, and bayside paying at an even lower rate.

Your MSTU classification is determined by your property tax designation as defined in the tax rolls. (View your designation at www.gulfpa.com)

It is also important to note that the MSTUs contain caps (see below) and will automatically sunset, or expire, at the end of the life of the original bond.

How much will this cost me?

Provided that all 3 MSTUs pass, the examples on the next page are what a “hypothetical” property in each MSTU classification would pay in taxes for the project. This projection is based on the cost information we have to date; however, please keep in mind the millage rate could be as high as the caps set forth in the ordinances of 6 mills for gulf-front, 4 mills for gulf-interior and 2 mills for bayside in the event that the project cost were to increase or in the event of failure of one or more of the taxing districts in the MSTU vote.

Important Note: Since the amount necessary to pay back the bond is a fixed amount each year, as property values increase with a restored beach, more homes are built and the Cape develops, the millage rate will decrease – as the cost can be spread among a larger group of people. As a result, the rate should be the highest in year one and then decrease annually.

At its April 25th meeting, the BOCC accepted by resolution our recommendation that provided each of the MSTUs passes, gulf-front properties will pay for 70% of the total project cost through their MSTU tax, gulf-interior properties will pay for 25%, and bayside will pay for 5%. As a result, based on the cost projections, the millage rates would be as follows:

Gulf-front	5.08 mills
Gulf-interior	1.73 mills
Bayside	1.00 mills

This equates to an estimated annual tax as follows, for each tax classification:

Taxable Value	\$250,000	\$500,000	\$1,000,000
Gulf-front	\$ 1,270	\$ 2,540	\$ 5,080
Gulf-interior	\$ 433	\$ 865	\$ 1,730
Bayside	\$ 250	\$ 500	\$ 1,000

WHO VOTES ON THE MSTUs?

After research and review by legal counsel, it has been confirmed that the vote will be limited to **registered voters within the project area**. This includes property owners, their children of voting age who reside with them, and individuals who rent a residence within the project area. However, nonresident property owners can voice their opinion through our survey form (enclosed).

If the voters in any of the three MSTU areas do not approve the referendum, that MSTU will be rescinded and the County will not assess the tax for that group of properties. Obviously, the rejection of one or more of the MSTUs could mean the failure of the entire project.

When and where will the MSTU referendum vote be held?

The referendum vote is set for **Tuesday, June 27, 2006**. The polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. There will be one polling place – the South Gulf County Volunteer Fire Station at 240 Cape San Blas Road, near Salinas Park.

Can I vote by absentee ballot?

If you are a qualified registered Gulf County voter within the project area, yes, you may. There are specific requirements and procedures that must be followed to vote by absentee ballot. To request an absentee ballot and learn the specific procedures, contact the Gulf County Supervisor of Elections, Linda Griffin. The phone number is 850-229-6117, and the email address is gulfsoe@gtcom.net

Which of the three MSTU Classifications will I vote on?

You will be voting on the MSTU classification applicable to the property attached to your registered voting address. It doesn't matter if you own more than one

property in the project area or properties in more than one MSTU classification. You'll still only cast one ballot, again, based on the classification applicable to your registered address with the Supervisor of Elections.

Where can I get answers to my questions or hear more from the experts?

There are currently two town halls scheduled to take place in upcoming weeks (see schedule in the blue box below) to give resident and nonresident property owners a chance to ask questions or get more information on any specific areas that you may wish to learn more about. Our coastal engineer, Michael Dombrowski of MRD Associates, and Phil Flood, FDEP Environmental Manager, as well as other subject matter experts and members of the SJPBAC will be available to answer your questions and address your concerns. There will be a series of handouts addressing commonly asked questions about matters such as the MSTUs, the Erosion Control Line, etc.

How do I complete the owners' survey? Does it really matter if I return it?

Enclosed with this mailing you'll find a postage-paid return survey card. The three questions are straight-forward, and it will take just a moment to complete and return. It's very important that you do take the time to express your position on our beach restoration project because the local voters and the BOCC want to hear your opinion. We hope that after reviewing all the information that's been made available to you over the past several months, you'll agree beach restoration is the best way to protect the future of your property, your investment or retirement plans, and the beaches of the Cape. However, whatever your opinion, we'd ask you to take the time to complete the survey and be heard. Also, if you'd prefer, you can complete the survey online at www.savethecape.com. **Each parcel gets counted as one returned opinion survey, not each property owner. PLEASE RETURN YOUR SURVEY BY MAY 22, 2006!**

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:

- **Town Hall Meeting, May 12, 2006, St. Joseph's Bay Country Club, 3:00 p.m.**
- **May 22, 2006, Deadline to Return Owners' Survey**
- **Town Hall Meeting, June 17, 2006, St. Joseph's Bay Country Club, 10:00 a.m.**
- **MSTU Vote, June 27, 2006, South Gulf County Volunteer Fire Station**

How can I learn more & how can I help?

Sign up at our website www.savethecape.com to stay up-to-date on the project progress. If you wish to become more involved, email info@savethecape.com or call Paula Ramsey Pickett at the TDC, 850-229-7800.

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