

SHORELINES – September 2003
As presented to the Island Review Magazine.

“SECTION 933 UPDATE”

Our Section 933 Project suffered a series of almost fatal setbacks in July as the U.S. House and Senate elected not to include the \$12.5 million appropriation necessary for the Project in their versions of the Energy and Water Development Appropriation Bill for Federal Fiscal Year 2004. Actually, the House and Senate funding recommendations for beach nourishment and shore protection from a national perspective are as equally discouraging. Of course there are always emotional peaks and valleys to navigate in the ever-changing beach nourishment/shore protection landscape. However, we surely appear to be entrenched in a rather deep valley at the present.

There is a glimmer of hope in the fact that the House-Senate Conference Committee must still convene and reconcile differences in their respective versions of the Bill. This provides an ever-so small, but realistic opening to gain the \$12.5 million Federal appropriation necessary to construct the Section 933 phase of the larger Brandt Island Pump-Out/Section 933 Project. The entire Project would utilize up to 5 million cubic yards of sand from the Morehead City Harbor Navigation Project to nourish a 13.1-mile stretch of Bogue Banks including the beaches of Fort Macon, Atlantic Beach (AB), Pine Knoll Shores (PKS), and Indian Beach (IB). In basic terms, the Section 933 Project would nourish the shorelines of PKS and IB, while the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Base Disposal Plan would nourish the shorelines of AB and Fort Macon. Also, the Base Disposal Plan is implemented at a 100% cost to the Federal government; the Section 933 effort on the other hand, has an element of non-Federal cost sharing.

Without getting into the “nitty-gritty” of the law-making process, there appears to be funding for the Base Disposal Plan in the budgets released by the President, House, and Senate and therefore, there is a high degree of confidence that this appropriation (~\$13 million) will survive the upcoming House-Senate Conference Committee and will subsequently be approved by the President. Unfortunately, the \$12.5 million appropriation for the Section 933 project was not included in any of the budgets released by the President or Congress. Thus, all our efforts will be focused on the House-Senate Conference Committee deliberations. The Conference Committee should convene in September subsequent to a month long Congressional recess. If Federal funding for the Section 933 Project is not forthcoming, then only the Base Disposal Plan will be constructed – there will simply be no funding to construct the Section 933 portion of the Project.

Assuming for a minute that the Section 933 Project is not constructed, the actual volume of sand that would likely be placed on Fort Macon and AB will be approximately 3.58 million cubic yards (mcy). The sources of sand include (1) 1.95 mcy contained in Brandt Island that is considered "Federal Sand", meaning that the ultimate disposal of this material is a Federal responsibility, (2) 0.75 mcy cubic yards of shoal material dredged from the inner harbor, and (3) 0.88 mcy stored in Brandt Island that is often referred to as “Port Sand”, which as the name indicates is under the auspices of the N.C. Port Authority.

How much sand is 3.58 mcy? For perspective, the recently completed eastern Emerald Isle Project was a 1.85 mcy effort and the PKS/IB Beach Restoration Project that was

SHORELINES – September 2003
As presented to the Island Review Magazine.

constructed in 2001-02 was a 1.73 mcy effort. Or envisioned in a different manner, 3.58 mcy is enough sand to cover a two-lane highway from Fort Macon to the Pointe in Emerald Isle with approximately 29 feet of sand!

If the Section 933 Project is resuscitated in the House-Senate Conference Committee, then the shoal material from Beaufort Inlet will also be incorporated in the beach nourishment effort and would bring the total volume of sand for the Project in the 5 mcy range. Of course, the most important aspect of the Section 933 Project is to start viewing sand as a resource, not a disposal product that is “dumped” to a confined area of the beach. Rather, the “modus operandi” for navigational dredging should always include an element of sand management planning that extends the recreational, economic, and storm protection benefits of this important resource over the greatest area possible.

The \$12.5 million appropriation we are seeking for the Section 933 Project would only constitute approximately 0.0005% of the entire Energy and Water Development Budget recently released by the House. This literally is a plus/minus figure on a small highway construction project. Although every appropriation adds to the whole and Congress must exercise fiduciary responsibility, there are few projects that are one-time in nature and have such tangible benefits as the Section 933 Project. It is difficult to ascertain why Congress would not want to support their own program that begins to achieve Sand Management goals that benefit our region, State, and Nation. Let’s hope we see a change of heart when the House-Senate Conference Committee meets in September.