

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

THE FEDERAL FY 03 & FY 04 BUDGETS

Last month we noted that with some perseverance and maybe a couple rubs of the magic lamp, both legislative bodies of Congress would reconcile their differences and forward an omnibus package for the President's signature in the middle part of February. As luck would have it, everything fell into place and with the stroke of a pen on February 20th; the President put the finishing touches on the Federal Fiscal Year 2003 (FY 03) budget. Although FY 03 actually started last October 1st and there were some serious concerns that we may not even have a budget for this year, we can now put the FY 03 budget process behind us and start focusing on FY 04. So how did our Section 933 Project and Feasibility Study for the 50-year Project fare?

Simply stated, \$300,000 out of the requested amount of \$300,000 was appropriated for the Section 933 Project Study, and \$350,000 out of the requested \$603,000 was appropriated for the 50-year Project. Obviously, we're all encouraged with the Federal Government's commitment to the Section 933 Project and this appropriation will go a long way to completing the second and final year of the Study, and also enables the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop final plans and specifications for the Brandt Island Pump-Out/Section 933 Project. As far as the 50-year Project is concerned, the funding shortfall for FY 03 may be a little disappointing, but the President's initial budget for FY 04 recommends enough funding to just about compensate for all the appropriation shortfalls in previous years. Although this recommendation must survive the House and Senate legislative processes, this is a very good sign. Hopefully, the President will sign the FY 04 budget into law before October 1st 2003 when the Federal fiscal year actually begins.

Who should we thank for these appropriations? Most of the thanks goes to anyone who contacted our congressional delegation! Every fax, letter, and e-mail let's our congressional delegation understand how important these Projects are and that maintaining funding at recommended levels helps our Projects come to fruition that much sooner. Your letters really do make a difference and FY 04 presents some unique challenges that could use some local support.

The construction phase of the Brandt Island Pump-Out/Section 933 Project is scheduled to begin this upcoming November and is contingent on whether or not the Federal appropriation for FY 04 will be sufficient to accommodate construction costs. The Brandt Island Pump-Out/Section 933 Project will nourish our beaches from Fort Macon to the Indian Beach/Emerald Isle town boundary and will be constructed as an extension of the Morehead City Federal Navigation Project at Beaufort Inlet. We will discuss the construction parameters and provide background information for the entire Project next month, but for now, we can conceptualize the Project as being divided into two zones. The first zone encompasses Fort Macon and Atlantic Beach. The disposal of dredged material to this area of Bogue Banks is the least-costly option for the Navigation Project, and thus no costs are incurred by the County or individual municipalities. The Section 933 component on the other hand is simply the portion of the Project area that encompasses Pine Knoll Shores (PKS) and Indian Beach (IB), and is cost shared between the Federal Government, State, and County (via PKS and IB).

At this stage of the FY 04 appropriation process, the President has recommended almost \$13 million out of the \$26.6 million required for the Project; and therefore we will need to seek a

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\$13.6 million Congressional “add” for FY 04. An “add” simply means that the House and Senate will need to include this extra funding in their versions of the FY 04 budget before the budget is returned to the President for his endorsement. Again, hopefully all of this will occur before October 1, 2003.

What happens if we are unsuccessful in gaining this “add”? In this case, the Section 933 Project would be disregarded because of a lack in funding, and only the beaches of Fort Macon and Atlantic Beach would be nourished.

With all of this in mind, the focus of our efforts for this year is to bring the entire Brandt Island Pump-Out/Section 933 Project into fruition. Legislatively speaking, the success or failure of completing the entire Project will really be dependent on whether or not the House and Senate include the full \$26.6 million appropriation in their versions of the Energy and Water Appropriation Bills for FY 04. Hopefully, the full appropriation will be included in both versions, the joint conference report, and signed by the President. A key element to this process is public support of the Project and your continued efforts to write to our Congressional delegation. Thank you again for previous support and future efforts.

Beach Commission Nominee Receives National Award

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Geoff Bowman, a former legislative assistant for Congressman Walter B. Jones (R-NC), is the recipient of the American Coastal Coalition’s first-ever “Congressional Staffer Award”. Geoff was nominated for the award by the Carteret County Beach Commission who cited Geoff’s efforts for helping Congressman Jones introduce Beneficial Use of Dredged Materials legislation and assisting local communities in their efforts to introduce sand management legislation specific to the Bogue Banks/Morehead City Harbor area. The Beach Commission also recognized Geoff’s proactive approach in the appropriations cycle and his support for the Brandt Island Pump-Out/Section 933 and 50-year Shore Protection Projects.

The County’s Shore Protection Manager, Greg “rudi” Rudolph presented the Congressional Staffer of the Year Award to Geoff on behalf of the Beach Commission at a February 26th evening reception located at the Washington Court Hotel, Washington, D.C. The reception and award ceremony were part of the American Coastal Coalition’s Annual Summit entitled “Beach Megatrends: Critical Issues for America”; a three day event highlighting various presentations by key elected officials from coastal districts throughout the U.S.