

SHORELINES – August 2002

As presented to the Island Review Magazine.

Every month, it seems like an event of some variety thrusts a shore protection related topic to the forefront of everyone's mind. An editorial recently published by the Raleigh News & Observer staff entitled "Sand Science Deficit" proved to be the latest catalyst for discussion. In summation, this article implied that absolutely no biological monitoring is taking place in relation to the Bogue Banks Restoration Project for Pine Knoll Shores, Indian Beach, and Emerald Isle. This couldn't be further from the truth. So what exactly does biological monitoring entail, and what plan is being pursued for the Bogue Banks Restoration Project?

A comprehensive biological monitoring plan has been implemented that establishes June and November as sampling months for the offshore borrow areas (sand source areas) and beach habitats. The general intent of the plan is to determine how long it will take for biological populations to return to baseline conditions. Pre-project sampling was completed in 2001 and serves as that baseline condition for future monitoring events. Our local municipalities are committed to perform up to 10 sampling events at a total cost of \$500,000. If biological recovery is demonstrated before the 10 events are completed, then the monitoring plan can be abbreviated. The first post-project monitoring event was conducted last month - just two months after the last grain of sand from the first phase of the project was placed on the beach.

The requirement for this monitoring plan is delineated in both the State and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers permits for the project. The sampling protocol and schedule were based on a series of reviews and meetings with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service, N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, University of North Carolina Institute of Marine Sciences, and the Corps of Engineers. Even more encouraging, if the biological recovery for the Bogue Banks Restoration Project mimics recovery for other beach restoration projects throughout the east coast, we can expect recovery on the beach within months. The biologic recovery for the offshore areas could take as little as months, or as long as a couple of years. Also, we have a six-year sea turtle nesting monitoring program in place that is designed and conducted by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.

It is unfortunate that the News & Observer failed to recognize all of the monitoring efforts that we have been undertaking before preparing their editorial piece and casting Bogue Banks in a negative light. Needless to say we have indeed implemented a plan to fully understand how the restoration project is affecting the fauna (aka "critters") of the offshore and beach habitats, and are also providing the State of North Carolina with invaluable data that can be used to make wise coastal policy decisions in the future.

Beach Commission Update

The proposed "Sand Management Plan" Water Resources Development Act provision dominated the discussion at the June 2002 Beach Commission meeting. Although Congressman Walter Jones has introduced the proposed legislation to a House of Representative Committee, the Commission debated some suggested changes to the language before its introduction to the Senate Committee. No formal decisions were made regarding this language but a special meeting was called to further discuss the changes. In other news, the Commission approved funding for a new "stay off the dunes" type of promotional pamphlet, and also approved funding for twenty temperature dataloggers. These dataloggers will be used by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission to monitor incubation temperatures of sea turtle nests. Don't forget the monthly Beach Commission meetings are now held on the fourth Monday of the month, at 2:00 pm, Pine Knoll Shores Town Hall.