

SHORELINES – May 2002
As presented to the Island Review Magazine.

The days are becoming longer, the sun feels warm, the ocean water feels refreshing, the fish are beginning to bite, and our favorite shops and restaurants have re-opened. It must be that wonderful time of year we all look forward to. You guessed it - it's time for the U.S. House and Senate Subcommittees to develop an Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill that will include federal appropriations (funding) for our Bogue Banks Shore Protection and Section 933 Projects. What? You were thinking it was summer time? Of course it is, and it's a great time of year to be at Bogue Banks, but it is also the time of year when the Shore Protection Office, and for that matter everyone interested in protecting our beaches, to stay focused on the events occurring in Washington, D.C.

The federal appropriation process serves as a catalyst for non-federal sponsors such as the County and State to engage in beach restoration projects and remains a key element that keeps our current projects on schedule. These federal appropriations are actually distributed to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and are matched by the non-federal sponsor (County/State) in some set proportion. The proportion is based upon the project type and in what stage each project is at.

One may think that these federal appropriations are simply distributed to the USACE at the beginning of each fiscal year and require minimal effort to secure. After all, the USACE is a federal agency so funding should be as easy as just filling out a form and receiving a check for the full amount requested. If it was only that easy! To the contrary, assuring USACE funding for our beach restoration projects is a full-time endeavor and follows a very arduous path that must be re-initiated at the beginning of each fiscal year. The federal fiscal year begins October 1st and ends September 30th.

Possibly the best way to illustrate this process is to see how our Bogue Banks Shore Protection and Section 933 Projects are funded.

Every year the USACE, along with other federal agencies, will make appropriation recommendations for the President to incorporate into the President's Budget. These recommendations include those to maintain federal funding for the Feasibility Study of our Shore Protection Project. This budget becomes public sometime in late January/early February and in most instances, does not provide for full project funding. In the case of the Shore Protection Project, inadequate funding could prolong the Feasibility Study, thereby pushing the initial construction date of the project even further into the future.

The President's Budget is subsequently forwarded to the House, and then Senate Appropriations Energy and Water Development Subcommittees for review. In this interim, the Shore Protection Office and concerned citizens can contact their congressional representatives and request that the President's Budget be modified to reflect a full appropriation for the Feasibility Study. After a tug-of-war between these entities, House and Senate staff from the Subcommittees meet in an effort to develop an Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill for a given fiscal year. Hopefully, the Feasibility Study of our Shore Protection Project is given a full appropriation, and the entire bill is signed into law by the President on or before the start of the federal fiscal year on October 1st.

I recently came across a statement made from Senator Burns (Montana - R) that neatly summarizes the appropriation process currently in session. Burns recently complained about the President's low budget figures for the USACE and noted that the Presidential Administration "knows full well this funding...is going to be restored by Congress", but will blame Congress for being "big spenders." "It's kind of a clever game, but it's tedious..."

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With that quote in mind, let's remember that only the Feasibility Study for the Shore Protection Project is funded via Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bills. This does not permit the final authorization of the Shore Protection Project. The final authorization of water resource projects such as the Shore Protection Project are actually contained in Water Resource Development Acts (WRDAs). These Acts are normally passed every two years and follow a similar path as Energy and Water Appropriation Bills. The Shore Protection Project will need to be included in a WRDA to initiate construction and to ensure its solvency for the 50-year project duration. Usually, the President's WRDA proposal does not contain project-specific provisions. Once again, Congress provides the stimulus causing insertion of these project-specific provisions. As you may now be able to guess, our input to this process remains very important if the final plans to implement the Shore Protection Project are to be formally approved. Most likely, the Shore Protection Project will be included in WRDA 2006, with WRDA 2004 and WRDA 2008 being best-case and worst-case scenarios, respectively.

Funding for the Section 933 Project follows a more direct yet different path than the Shore Protection Project. Unlike the Shore Protection Project, which is funded under the "General Investigations" section of the USACE budget, the Section 933 Project is funded via the "Operation and Maintenance (O&M)" section. Therefore, the feasibility, PED (preconstruction, engineering and design), and implementation phases are all part of the O&M budget for the Morehead City Harbor Navigation Project. Every year, O&M funding for the navigation project is requested to be included in the President's Budget and follows the Energy and Water Development subcommittee pathway described above. Again, hopefully a full appropriation is granted in the final Energy and Water Resource Development Bill.

I invite you to visit <http://co.carteret.nc.us/shoreprotection/funding.htm> if you require a more detailed explanation of the funding process. You will also find contact information for our congressional delegation, and a letter you can download, modify, and send that supports full federal funding of the Shore Protection and Section 933 Projects for fiscal year 2003. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions regarding this, or any other shore protection issues.

Beach Commission Update

At the March 2002 Beach Commission meeting, the Commission unanimously approved a proposal by the University of North Carolina Institute of Marine Sciences to conduct a beach monitoring program using a real-time kinematic global positioning system. This state-of-the-art beach monitoring system provides high-resolution maps of the beach/nearshore surface and can also be utilized to generate 3-dimensional models of the beach system. The Beach Commission also welcomed David Nash, an agricultural extension agent for North Carolina State University, to the meeting. Mr. Nash presented a slide show summarizing the importance of dune vegetation on barrier islands and his work developing a dune plant cultivating system for the Town of Oak Island.