

Island Review – Emerald Tidings – October 17 Issue

BEACH NOURISHMENT PROJECT MOVES FORWARD

The Town opened bids for the Eastern Phase of the Beach Nourishment Project on September 27. Weeks Marine, Inc., of Covington, Louisiana, was the lowest responsive bidder, with a total bid of \$10,550,000 for the project. This bid is within the established budget for the project, and the Town will move forward and execute the contract.

The Eastern Phase of the project will occur later this winter in the permitted environmental "window" of November 16 – April 1. The project will place a total of approximately 1.8 million cubic yards of material on a 5.8 mile stretch of Emerald Isle's beach. The project will cover the area from the Indian Beach town line west to approximately Santa Maria Drive (near the 6800 block).

The project will create a flat berm approximately 7 feet above sea level in the project area. The newly constructed berm will range from 50-65 feet of additional dry-sand width on the western end of the 5.8 mile project to 100-125 feet of additional dry-sand width on the eastern end of the project. The project scope also includes the construction of new dunes or improvements to existing dunes along approximately 2 miles of the total 5.8 mile stretch of beach.

IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR OCEANFRONT PROPERTY OWNERS IN THE EASTERN PHASE NOURISHMENT AREA

Construction of the Eastern Phase will occur later this winter, and will involve the placement of significant amounts of additional material on the beach in front of oceanfront structures. While this material will provide beneficial storm protection and a wider recreational beach, there will be some inconveniences and issues that oceanfront property owners need to be aware of:

- Nourishment operations, under ideal conditions, will operate 24 hours a day, and may cause some night-time disturbance. The continual movement down the beach should limit the disturbance to any one particular area to a very short time period.
- Oceanfront property owners protected by sandbags may be required to remove these sandbags in conjunction with the nourishment project. The NC Division of Coastal Management will contact these owners in the coming weeks to determine if these sandbags must be removed. If the NC Division of Coastal Management determines that these sandbags must be removed, the property owner will be responsible for removing the sandbags.
- New dune construction will occur in all the "gaps" between dunes, unless this would place the dune under a house. In that case the dune line will detour to around the front (seaward side) of the house. Any structures left in place in the gaps (sand fences, etc.) will be buried or removed.
- Sand fences that are in the dunes should not be affected by the project. However, any sand fences in gaps between dunes need to be removed by the property owner. There are also several properties that have sand fences on the berm (the relatively flat area of the beach at the base of the dune), and these need to be removed, as the nourishment will raise the berm height. Sand fences may be installed again after the project is completed, provided they are installed in accordance with CAMA regulations.

- The lower portions of stairways will be buried by the nourishment material, and some stairways may have a new dune constructed in front of them. Permit applications for new stairway construction over these dunes will be evaluated on a case by case basis after the project is completed.
- The Town will be coordinating the planting of sea oats and bitter panicum on the newly constructed dunes in April once the project is completed. Volunteers will be solicited to assist in this project next spring.
- The Eastern Ocean Regional Access will serve as the “staging area” for the contractor, and portions of the access will be closed to the public while the project is being completed. The Town intends to keep a portion of the access open to the public during the project.

DUNES AND VEGETATION ORDINANCE REVISIONS NEARLY COMPLETE

The Planning Board and Town Board have been working hard to craft revisions to the Town’s Dunes and Vegetation ordinance. Several joint meetings have been held, and the proposed ordinance revisions are nearly complete. The Planning Board will consider the latest draft at their October 28 meeting, and there will be a special Town Board meeting on November 4 to solicit input from interested members of the community. The Town Board is tentatively scheduled to conduct the official public hearing and begin deliberations on the ordinance revisions at their November 12 meeting. A draft of the proposed revisions is posted on the Town’s web site, www.emeraldisle-nc.org. Additional information about upcoming meetings will also be posted on the web site.

TOWN RECEIVES FAVORABLE BOND RATINGS

Moody’s Investor Service and Standard & Poors (S&P) recently recognized the Town of Emerald Isle’s fiscal integrity by assigning “A” ratings to the Town’s General Obligation bonds for the beach nourishment project. Moody’s assigned an A3 rating, while S&P assigned an A- rating. These bonds, issued on October 8, will finance construction of the Town’s beach nourishment project later this winter.

An “A” rating is excellent for a coastal town of Emerald Isle’s size, and is in fact a higher rating than neighboring Atlantic Beach, and higher than the City of New Bern and the Town of Washington, which are obviously much larger than Emerald Isle. The “A” rating helped the Town to secure a low 2.8% interest rate for the bonds, which will result in significant cost savings for our taxpayers over the term of the bonds.

The main factors contributing to the “A” ratings were the Town’s high assessed valuation, low outstanding debt levels, healthy fund balance levels, high tax collection rate, and the fiscally sound plan for repayment of the beach nourishment bonds. The Town is proud of these ratings, especially since the rating agencies tend to be a little harder on small towns, and towns susceptible to hurricane damage.

COMMUNITY CENTER DAMAGED BY WATER LINE BREAK

A failed water line at the Community Center on September 29 resulted in water damage to the aerobics room, weight room, gymnasium, and an office. Several inches of standing water accumulated, causing these facilities in the Community Center to close indefinitely. Flooring is being dried, treated, and replaced where necessary, and drywall is also being replaced. Classroom areas were not affected, and these areas remain open to the public.

Parks and Recreation staff, Public Works staff, and contractors responded quickly and immediately began work to correct the problems and reopen these areas, however, these areas of the Community Center may be closed to the public for as much as 4-6 weeks. In the meantime, we have arranged for Community Center members to use the facilities at the Cape Carteret Aquatic and Wellness Center free of charge until the Community Center reopens. Thanks to all for their patience as we address these problems.

Please contact Alesia Sanderson at 354-6350 or monitor the Town's web site at www.emeraldisle-nc.org for information about the status of the Community Center.