



Town of North Topsail Beach **Beach, Inlet, and Sound Advisory Committee**

Proposal for a 'Beach, Inlet, and Sound Advisory Committee'

Background: Several years ago, the N. Topsail Beach Board of Aldermen established the Beach Erosion Study Team or BEST committee as it was known with the mission "Our Mission: To evaluate and recommend to the North Topsail Beach (NTB) Board of Aldermen both short- and long-term solutions that address shoreline protection and stabilization of the beaches and dunes of the Town of North Topsail Beach." The goals of BEST were i) to reduce potential for storm, wave, and erosion along NTB's shoreline, ii) to stabilize NTB's beaches and shoreline, and iii) to establish a sense of trust and credibility within the Town of North Topsail Beach.

The BEST report to the Board of Aldermen on 5 February, 2009 had the following five recommendations to the Town. These were 1) **Beach nourishment** and adoption of the five-phased implementation plan developed by CP&E, 2) **"Pay-as-you-go Implementation.** BEST supports implementing the Beach Nourishment solutions on a "pay-as-you-go" basis, avoiding debt financing of the projects. If outside funding is insufficient to fund any portion of the implementation plan, then BEST recommends establishing tax districts that correspond to the phased implementation plan," 3) **"Cost Sharing.** Assuming NTB property owners would be required to fund some or all of the costs of Beach Nourishment, BEST recommends that Oceanfront (OF) property owners should contribute 90% of the costs, and non-Oceanfront (non-OF) property owners 10% of the costs. 4) **"NTB Citizen Input.** Beach Nourishment is not only a very expensive and challenging undertaking, it is also not without some risk – and not without very vocal critics. It is imperative, therefore, that the citizens of NTB support the implementation of Beach Nourishment," and 5) **"Need for Long-range Plan.** North Topsail Beach must develop a long range plan to ensure that future generations do not face the same risk to NTB property and quality-of-life that threatens the Town today. NTB should consider enlisting the assistance of North Carolina State University's "Natural Resources Leadership Institute" in helping develop a long-range plan." Here is the link to the [BEST report](#) on the town website

Current Status and Need. The town implemented phases 1 and 5 of the BEST report recommendation for beach nourishment but with money financed rather than the 'pay-as-you-go' approach recommended by the BEST committee. The town is pursuing a hardened structure at the New River Inlet to collect a portion of the migrating sand from the down-drift current before it can go back into the inlet. This will slow the rate of severe erosion at the north end for the first 2000 ft or so of shoreline as well as reduce the number of yearly-maintenance dredging cycles needed in the inlet by the Army Corps of Engineers. Since the BEST committee reported its recommended goals and objectives in 2009, the Mayor and Board of Aldermen as a whole now serve as the town's beach committee along with the town manager. Recently, the town contracted with ATM, a coastal engineering firm, to facilitate Hurricane Florence and Hurricane Dorian storm-damage recovery through FEMA. The FEMA Cat B dune restoration work in



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Phases 2-4 should be completed before January, 2022. The FEMA Cat B beach restoration in Phase 5 should start by the end of January, 2022.

As the board of aldermen have a wide ranging responsibility to the citizens of N. Topsail Beach, the time the board can spend on beach nourishment plans is limited during our monthly board meetings. The few attempts at special meeting workshops to develop a comprehensive beach plan in the past few years have not produced a way forward and has come to frustrate some of the aldermen in terms of lack of progress. Hurricane Florence has only compounded our beach nourishment efforts and long-term beach plans.

Planning for beach nourishment is really only one component of the dynamic of the coastline around our island town, the other two being the New River Inlet and sound side along the Atlantic IntraCoastal Waterway. As experience has taught our board as well as previous boards, inlet management must be tied to beach nourishment. The town took the lead in establishing the New River Inlet Stakeholders group that meets in conjunction with the quarterly meetings of the coast-wide stakeholders participating in the Shallow Draft Inlet MOA between the state and Army Corps. Onslow County, although a participant in the NRI stakeholders group, has provided little leadership or monetary commitment to inlet management. Even though the Army Corps focus for shallow draft inlets is navigation, municipalities can also benefit when beach-compatible dredge spoils are disposed of on our beaches.

Since the BEST report, there have been several changes in how towns and counties can fund beach nourishment. The State Legislature passed a Shallow Draft Navigation Channel Dredging and Aquatic Weed Fund based in part on fuel tax to support dredging of inlets for commercial fisheries and recreational access to the ocean. For a Tier 2 county, Onslow County dredge projects require a local 33 -67% match with state funds. Normally the local match is split 50-50 between county and municipality. As recently as this summer the Shallow Draft Inlet fund had \$40 million available with about half of that amount already committed to approved inlet dredge projects. More recently, based on recommendation from the state sponsored, Beach and Inlet Management Plan (BIMP) update, the State Legislature approved a 'Coastal Storm Damage Mitigation Fund' but did not appropriate funds for 2017. In 2018, diligent work by our state coastal representatives in Raleigh resulted in a one-time fund transfer of \$5 million dollars to this fund. In response to Hurricane Florence recovery, the state marked \$18.5 million for the Coastal Storm Damage Mitigation Fund as part of the hurricane recovery funds 2018-2019. Currently, the legislature's proposed state budget for 2021-2023 includes \$40 million in one-time funding for the Coastal Storm Damage Mitigation Fund. This fund would require a 50-50 state local match. Any comprehensive beach nourishment plan for N. Topsail Beach should be centered on these two sources of state funds.

While the causes of sea-level rise continue to be debated, old timers on the island will tell you that sound-side flooding has become more serve in the past decade. Our board has given little



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or no attention to this issue other than an acknowledgment in our CAMA Land Use Plan and by following the CAMA setback and wetland rules. Marsh sills were approved by the state in the last few years. An adaptation of the marsh sill known as 'Living Shorelines' have become the 'thing' right now in coastal management and our town should be exploring how to adopt some of these guidelines into our overall approach to sound-side flooding.

Topsail Beach has a chartered, Beach, Inlet and Sound Committee (BIS) that meets monthly to consider issues related to the coastline around their town. The committee has a citizen Chair, two additional citizen members and two Town Commissioners with their town manager and coastal engineer as liaison to the committee. This model has worked well for their community. Topsail Beach completed a major beach nourishment event two years ago. Immediately prior to Hurricane Florence they had plans to construct a new 'berm' ocean side of their frontal dune for storm mitigation. They found that their private project in conjunction the state's Shallow Draft Inlet program was more economical than their approved federal project and thus declined to proceed with their federal project. Can the Topsail Beach BIS model work for NTB?

Action items

- Establish a Beach, Inlet, and Sound Advisory Committee (BISAC).
- Approve the proposed draft BISAC Charter.
- If committee established then:
 - Put out call for citizens to apply as a committee member.
 - Appoint the chair and six other members plus the *ex officio* members to the BISAC.
 - Charge the committee to work toward the goals that are set forth in the BISAC Charter.