

Brunswick Declared Eligible For Limited Federal Storm Aid

BY SUSAN USHER
Brunswick County was one of 10 eastern counties declared eligible Tuesday for a limited amount of federal assistance to help in recovery from the March 13 winter storm that caused an estimated \$23.5 million in damage and expenses here.

The 10 counties are among 32 included in an expansion of President Bill Clinton's earlier emergency declaration, which provided reimbursement for snow removal costs.

The extended declaration will partially reimburse counties for the costs of removing debris and taking emergency protective measures during the storm, which caused hurricane-like damage in the east.

"That's good and we appreciate all that, but we could use a little more," said Cecil Logan, Brunswick County's emergency management coordinator, who hasn't given up hope of additional federal assistance.

He learned of the county's inclusion during a statewide meeting of emergency management officials in Asheville this morning. "We were told it covered debris removal and emergency protective measures, but they did not outline what protective mea-

asures were," he said. More specifics are being sought. One item still unclear is whether any reimbursement will be available for dune repairs.

On Wednesday Logan planned to get more information from the state and begin gathering data from individual municipalities in the county regarding their cost for debris removal and emergency protective measures.

"It's going to need to be broken down as to type of equipment, type of debris, cubic yards, and the number of manhours," he said.

Some municipalities—such as Holden Beach, Long Beach and Ocean Isle Beach—have learned through experience the necessity of careful record-keeping during such emergencies, while others may be learning that lesson now.

At least one town, Calabash, still has not turned in either a request for assistance or a damage assessment.

"I hope we can work it out for them," said Logan.

Holden Beach estimated its losses at the highest of any municipality, at \$8 million, mostly from hurricane-force winds.

Told Tuesday evening of the declaration, Town Manager Gary Parker's initial reaction was, "That's great news! We've been waiting a long time for it."

He estimates the town will be able to seek reimbursement of overtime paid police and public works employees called in to help with the storm, and overtime pay for debris collection, as well as the cost of hiring a private contractor and paying Waste Industries, its trash hauler, for extra debris pick-ups.

"Beyond that we'll wait and see the de-

(See STORM, Page 2-A)

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

12/31/99
HOAG & SONS BOOK BINDERY
P.O. BOX 162
SPRINGPORT MI 49284

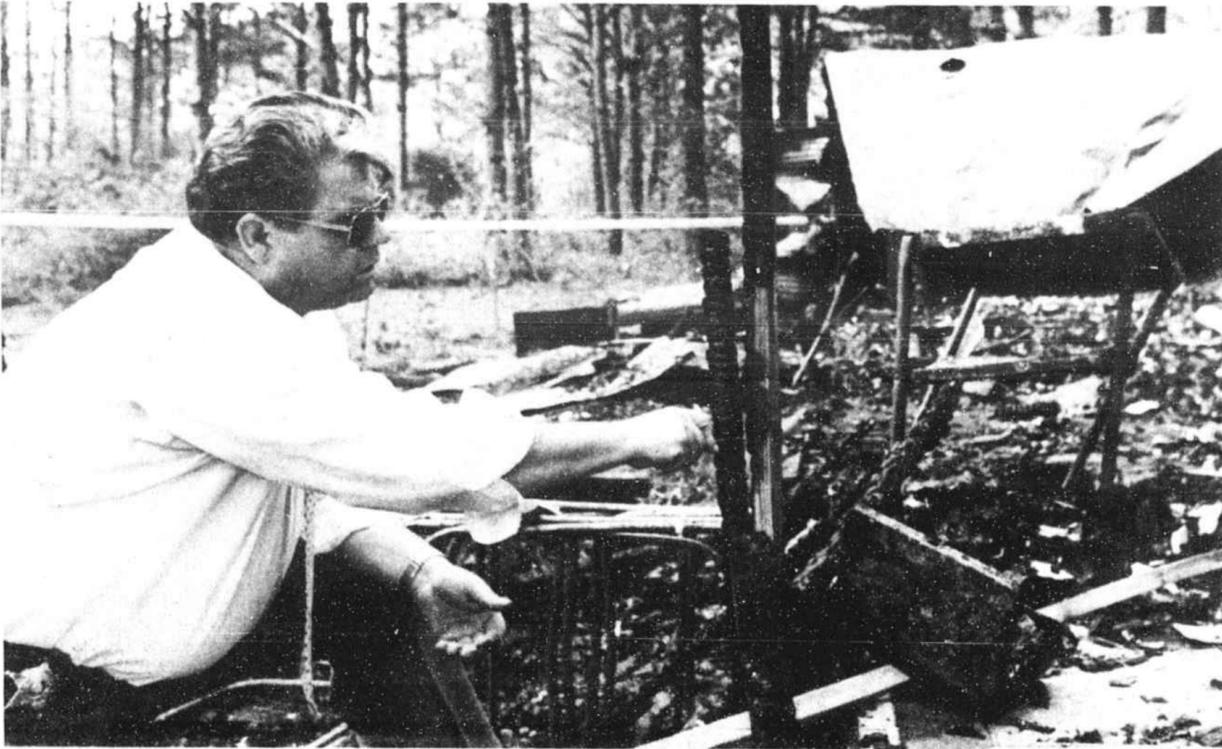
Thirty-First Year, Number 23

©1993 THE BRUNSWICK BEACON

Shalotte, North Carolina, Thursday, April 29, 1993

50¢ Per Copy

42 Pages, 3 Sections, 4 Inserts



BRUNSWICK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DETECTIVE Tom Hunter examines the charred remains of a mobile home destroyed in one of three fires believed to have been set by an arsonist in Calabash last week. The crimes may be related to a fire that consumed three other trailers in the neighborhood last February.

STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC CARLSON

Brunswick Plant Begins Bringing Unit 2 Reactor Back In Service

BY SUSAN USHER

Carolina Power & Light Co. began the slow process Tuesday evening of returning Unit 2 of its Brunswick Nuclear Plant to full generating power after it has stood idle for a little more than year.

The unit at the Southport plant should be to full power operations in 20 to 40 days, sometime in May, according to Roy A. Anderson, plant vice president. He said CP&L received its approval from the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission at 5:50 p.m. Tuesday and began the detailed start-up process immediately.

At a status meeting Monday at the plant, Anderson told NRC officials, "I do believe the people and the plant are ready to operate safely and reliably and with continued improvement."

However, Stewart Ebnetter, Region II director for the NRC, said approval would come only after his staff has checked to its satisfaction all items that were to be completed before restart.

Jon Johnson, deputy director of the NRC's Division of Reactor Projects and head of the restart readiness oversight committee, said staff wanted to verify several procedural changes instituted this past weekend at the plant and make sure that an emergency telephone system was operating properly before recommending restart to Ebnetter.

Anderson assured NRC officials Monday that the unit "start-up will be slow and deliberate," to ensure a safe return to service.

The start-up plan calls for a gradual increase of power over a period of 20 to 40 days, with testing of

equipment at each step and built-in "hold points" where performance will be assessed before continuing, and several points where management must approve continuation.

Two 11-day shutdowns are built into the schedule in the event repairs are needed during start-up, including one shutdown after the plant has reached full-power for testing purposes only. "If everything is leak-tight and running fine we can continue on with the start-up," Anderson said.

However, based on his prior experience, he anticipates workers having to replace seals and gaskets that have dried out over the past year and may not withstand the heat and pressure once start-up begins.

However, he said he rates the chances of a major problem during start-up at zero.

To support the restart, the NRC has five extra inspectors and a supervisor at the Brunswick Plant in addition to resident inspectors. R. L. "Dick" Prevatte, senior resident inspector, said the NRC will provide 24-hour monitoring of the restart effort.

The Brunswick plant has not produced electrical power since last April 21, when CP&L shut down the plant to replace fake and weak bolts in its back-up generator building. The NRC has proposed no enforcement action at this time relating to that problem.

CP&L expects to bring Unit 1 into service this fall, after refueling. It has backed off an earlier estimate of restart beginning as early as June.

The two boiling water reactors (See REACTOR, Page 2-A)

Arson Blamed For Seven Calabash Trailer Fires

BY ERIC CARLSON

John and Mildred McKinnon felt uneasy when three mobile homes burned to the ground less than 100 feet from their vacation trailer in Calabash the night of Feb. 11.

Their concern turned to alarm when three other homes in the neighborhood were damaged or destroyed last week in fires that police are blaming on one or more juvenile arsonists.

Detectives now suspect that a seventh fire, which destroyed a mobile home about a half-mile away last September, may have been set by the same suspect.

"We've definitely got a firebug on the loose. And he's got a dangerous hobby," said Brunswick County Sheriff's Detective Tom Hunter. "Sooner or later, somebody is going to get injured. We need to stop him before that happens."

The McKinnons own one of several dozen small mobile homes closely situated in a wooded area off River View Drive between the downtown restaurant district and the Calabash River. John calls it their

"home away from home."

For the past 17 years, the McKinnons have thought of their quiet little neighborhood as a peaceful place to relax during regular weekend visits from Cheraw, S.C.

It doesn't seem so quiet anymore as the couple looks across the bare ground where three trailers once stood, toward a fourth neighbor's "home away from home." It is partially collapsed, gutted and charred with yellow crime-scene tape strung around it.

That fire was reported at about 6 a.m. April 14. Calabash volunteer firefighters had just returned home after putting out a porch fire at a mobile home a short distance up River View Drive. Because the blaze started on the outside of the house, they knew it was arson.

Hunter later found a plastic jug that may have held the flammable liquid used to start the fire.

When the second call came in, they returned to the first fire, thinking it may have re-started. Then they saw the flames rising through the trees about 100 yards away. This fire

was fully involved and little could be done except to keep it from spreading to other homes.

"This thing is getting serious," Mrs. McKinnon said. "It makes you a little nervous when you lay down at night and you don't know if something is going to be on fire."

That's just what happened last Wednesday night (April 21) at about 11:30 as Mrs. McKinnon finished watching television and went into the bedroom. She happened to look outside at the trailer next door and saw a flickering reflection in the window. "I jumped up and went outside just as the fire department was coming through," she said.

It was another neighbor's mobile home burning about 30 yards away across an area of overgrown weeds and pine trees. Again, firefighters could do little more than contain the fire as it levelled the trailer.

"There's no doubt this one was intentionally set," Hunter said the next day as he used a pen knife to examine the charring pattern on a half-burnt piece of lumber.

He pointed out a large hole in the

trailer's floor near what was once the front door. The fire probably was set outside on the porch, quickly spread and broke through into the trailer's interior, he said.

When the owner returned to the mobile home he discovered that a lawn mower and several tools had been removed from a shed behind his former vacation home.

Once thought to be the acts of juveniles using the homes as "clubhouses," Hunter now feels that the more recent fires may have been set to destroy evidence of burglaries.

Hunter is pursuing a number of theories in the case and believes the same person or persons may have set the February fire that started in one trailer in the neighborhood and quickly spread to two others. Although that fire "seemed suspicious at the time," Hunter said no formal arson investigation was conducted.

Another trailer fire near Pine Burr Acres subdivision last September is also believed to have been intentionally set and may be connected with the more recent arsons, he said.

Residents Warming To Sewer System Proposal

BY LYNN CARLSON

If public hearings are a reliable indicator of public opinion, Sunset Beach residents have warmed considerably to the idea of a central sewer system—and one which serves a greater area than just their

southwestern corner of Brunswick County.

Most speakers at a well-attended Monday hearing said they are worried about pollution of the area's ground and surface waters and called for cooperation among local governments to seek a regional solution for disposing of stormwater as well as wastewater. They received hearty applause as they criticized those who have opposed a central sewer because the service could accelerate commercial and residential development.

The atmosphere was radically different from the town's previous hearing on the sewer issue last Dec. 7, when speaker after speaker opposed formation of the South Brunswick Water and Sewer Authority and questioned whether there was adequate evidence that septic tanks are polluting the local environment.

"I don't understand the confusion," said Shoreline Woods resident Ralph Heil at Monday's hearing. "It's quite obvious that a septic tank on a lot 50 or 60 by 100 feet can't support a single family, much less a rental unit."

Henry Satterwhite, who said he lives on the west end of the island portion of Sunset Beach, warned that sewer service just to Sunset Beach and Calabash alone won't clean up area waters. "You've still got the constant flow of the Intra-coastal Waterway. You can't go it alone or you're just wasting time."

Kathy Kakos, a Sea Trail resident, said, "I know the waters are contaminated, because they are closed to shellfishing. But how much do we do for shellfish if we do it just for us in Sunset Beach and Calabash? I feel we should be involved with the county and state and try to do an entire section of the coastal area."

Another resident, Teresa Regan, called for the town or county to warn vacationers against swimming or wading in the towns canals this summer.

Representatives of the real estate and construction industries were among the approximately 120 people attending the hearing, which was held at Sea Trail Plantation in anticipation of a crowd bigger than the town hall could hold. Endorsements for a regional sewer system were

presented by both the Brunswick Islands Board of Realtors and the Brunswick Islands Homebuilders Association.

Some speakers likened resistance to central sewer service to opposing replacement of the town's one-lane pontoon bridge. "You're not going to stop growth with or without a new bridge or a sewer system," said Zane Winters. His comments were echoed by Lloyd Grantham, who said, "We need a sewer system, and we don't need to wait 10 or 12 years as we have on the bridge."

The engineers have recommended that growth be controlled through zoning and planning measures, rather than by withholding central sewage disposal.

Those who have been most vocal in opposing the sewer concept over the past few months said little at Monday's hearing.

Minnie Hunt, treasurer of the Sunset Beach Taxpayers' Association and a frequent critic of environmental data used to support the sewer project, asked several questions about the data and testing methods (See HEARING, Page 2-A)

Holden Sewer Petitions Booted From Town Hall

BY DOUG RUTTER

Holden Beach property owners interested in signing one of two petitions concerning a sewer system on the island can no longer sign them at town hall.

Commissioners voted unanimously last week that petitions supporting and opposing a sewer system should not be left in town hall.

At their April 5 meeting, commissioners voted 3-2 to allow the pro-sewer petition at town hall. Gay Atkins, Gil Bass and David Sandifer voted in favor, and Jim Fournier and Sid Swarts were opposed.

After receiving the other petition, commissioners decided last Wednesday they didn't want either one at town hall.

Holden Beach developer James Hobbs initiated the petition supporting sewer. Homeowner Ike Shelton is among those circulating the petition against a sewer system.

Hobbs and Shelton recently purchased advertisements in the *Beacon* with the text of their petitions and room to sign at the bottom. The ads urged property owners to sign and send the ads to town hall.

Town officials said last week they don't want the ads sent to town hall because they make extra work for staff. Petitioners never got the town's permission to have the clippings sent to town hall.

Hobbs' petition urges the town board to "diligently and expeditiously pursue the design, acquisition and

construction of a public sewer system to serve the needs of the Town of Holden Beach."

"Such a system is critical to the well-being of the citizens of the town and their guests and to the large number of visitors who annually frequent the beach," it states.

"By installation of such a system the health of the populous served thereby and the condition of the environment will be greatly enhanced and protected."

The other petition asks the town board "to resist all efforts to cause a sewer system to be installed on Holden Beach."

It says "numerous studies commissioned by the town have failed completely to prove a need for a sewer system. Such pollution as we may have is caused primarily by storm water run-off."

"Sewer systems traditionally result in over-development, which in turn adds to storm water run-off, as pointed out in the 1984 environmental impact study done by the EPA."

As an example, the petition cites the New Hanover County sewer system which cost four or five times the original estimate and has not prevented waters around Wilmington from continuing to be closed to shellfishing.

"A sewer system on Holden Beach will benefit only the special interest groups and we will lose our family beach atmosphere," the anti-sewer petition concludes.

Inside...

- Birthdays.....2B
- Business News.....10C
- Calendar of Events.....6A
- Church News.....14A
- Classified.....1-10C
- Court Docket.....8A,11C
- Crime Report.....9A
- Entertainment.....11A
- Fishing.....12B
- Golf.....11B
- Obituaries.....14A
- Opinion.....4-5A
- People In The News.....4B
- Plant Doctor.....5B
- Sports.....8-11B
- Television.....12-13C