

Holden Officials Advised On Erosion Control

BY DOUG RUTTER

Rebuilding oceanfront dunes at Holden Beach will help protect property if a hurricane or another major winter storm comes along, but the dunes won't solve the island's ongoing erosion problem.

That was the message town officials heard Monday from Spencer Rogers, a coastal engineer with UNC Sea Grant who has studied erosion problems like the one at Holden for the last 15 years.

Town officials are concerned about the chronic erosion problem on the beach, and they're also worried about dunes that were flattened during a severe winter storm March 13.

"The council, as you might well imagine, is struggling with what to do," Mayor Wally Ausley told Rogers, who was asked to advise commissioners at their meeting Monday night.

"There aren't any easy answers," Rogers told the board. "There's no magic that's going to fix this and make the problem go away."

Rogers said rebuilding the dunes would help protect houses in the event of a storm. However, he said there's not much the community can do to control continuous erosion with its limited funds.

If the town board decides to rebuild the damaged dunes, Rogers said sand should be brought to the island from an outside source and added to the beach. Dunes should be built as far away from the ocean as possible.

As far as controlling the ongoing erosion problem along certain sections of the beach, Rogers said there isn't much property owners or the town can do without spending a lot of money.

Town officials say the east end of the island and the middle between the 500 and 900 blocks of Ocean Boulevard West are the worst areas for erosion.

Rogers said the only way to treat the problem is with a beach nourishment program, which costs about \$1 million per mile. "It's not a cure for erosion. It simply treats the illness."

Chronic erosion is not uncommon in North Carolina, where most beaches lose two or three feet per year. Rogers said one of the causes is that the sea level is rising 6 to 12 inches per century.

Although other sections of Holden Beach aren't losing much sand now, Rogers said there's no guaran-

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—Spencer Rogers, coastal engineer

tee erosion patterns won't change.

"Nature isn't fair in the short term, but it usually is in the long term," he said. "Just because you have areas that aren't eroding now doesn't mean they're safe in the future."

Asked how to protect roads threatened by the ocean, Rogers said sandbags usually work better than sand. "If you do it right it'll give you short-term protection."

Rogers advised against using bulldozers to push sand from the beach to form dunes. He said \$21 million in federal money was spent in North Carolina to push up dunes following Hurricane Hugo and most of the dunes are gone.

The engineer said property owners should fertilize vegetation along the dunes to help the plants grow and trap more sand.

Town Manager Gary Parker said

homeowners interested in rebuilding dunes at their property have until May 15 to complete the work under the state CAMA permit issued to the town.

Other Business

In other business Monday, commissioners:

■Gave final approval of assessments for the recently-completed canal dredging projects. Property owners in Holden Beach Harbor will pay \$377 for each 50-foot lot, while Heritage Harbor owners will pay \$150 per lot. Bills will be mailed in three weeks and landowners will have 30 days to pay.

■Granted permission for the annual Fourth of July fireworks display at Campground By The Sea. Town officials plan to discuss funding of the event when they work on the budget for next fiscal year. "If you want to put a contribution to it it'll go straight in the air," said campground manager William Williamson.

Post Offices Have New Hours, No More Closing For Lunch

The Shallotte and South Brunswick Islands post offices have announced new hours and dispatch times, according to spokesman Kathleen Heath.

The Shallotte facility, on U.S. 17 Business, is now open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. with no lunchtime closing. Mail dispatch times are 1:50 and 4:15 p.m. Saturday hours are 10 a.m. until 1 p.m.

The Shallotte Post Office phone number is 754-8213. The phone number in the current telephone directory will connect the caller with the South Brunswick Post Office.

The South Brunswick Post Office, on N.C. 904 at Seaside, beginning May 8 will be open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. with no lunchtime closing. Saturday hours will be from 10 a.m. until noon.

South Brunswick mail dispatch times will be 2:20 and 4:35 p.m.



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