THE BRUNSWICK BEACON, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 1994-PAGE 7-A



Island Draws National Attention

Twenty-seven people from across the United States and North Carolina attending the National Coastal Management Conference in Wilmington visited Bird Island last week. The group included Rees Poag, whose family is seeking permits to develop the barrier island southwest of Sunset Beach. Bird Island Preservation Society board members Walker Golder, Minnie Hunt and Frank Nesmith described the role of marshes in maintaining the natural balance of the coastal system, barrier island dynamics and inlet migration, rare and endangered species associated with the undeveloped island, and the proposed protection of the island through public acquisition. Above, Nesmith (right) points out the proposed path of a private bridge from Sunset Beach to the island.

Votes To Allow Bed-In-Fill Septic Systems BY ERIC CARLSON

After a three-month moratorium

on permits, builders will again be allowed to use "bed" type septic field systems on small lots covered with fill material, the Brunswick County Health Department decided Monday night

The move came as a result of an in-house study that found the systems commonly used in high-density residential areas and local beach communities work as well as other household sewage treatment methods

Of the 186 "bed-in-fill" septic systems permitted in the past ten years, only four have failed to operate properly, Health Director Michael Rhodes told the board at its regular meeting. Two of those were installed in the least desirable "Class 3" soils.

Brunswick stopped issuing permits for bed septic systems in fill material after state health officials informed the county that doing so

would violate sewage treatment regulations. After meeting with representatives of the N.C. Division of Environmental Health and Natural Resources, Rhodes ordered a study of bed-in-fill systems to gauge their effectiveness

There appears to be no adverse effects from the use of bed systems as permitted by the Brunswick County Health Department," the study found. "No appreciable difference can be found between bed systems installed in fill and those in natural soil."

On lots where space permits, the health department normally requires a "trench" septic field system. These employ a system of gravel-lined ditches that let effluent flow out of a septic tank and into the ground through perforated pipes.

In bed systems, which take up less room, the pipes are buried in a bed of gravel. The state allows such disposal methods in natural soils, but recently interpreted existing regulations to determine that bed systems could not be used on filled land. Disturbed soils compact and drain differently from natural soils.

Strict enforcement of the state regulations would have prevented construction on hundreds of undeveloped coastal housing sites in Brunswick County. It would have required many land owners to install more complicated and expensive treatment facilities.

"Brunswick County has a large number of lots and subdivision platted from the 1970s and before. Space is a major problem on these lots," the health department study says. Allowing bed-in-fill systems "will result in lots being permitted that were platted in the early 1970s and before.'

Rhodes' recommendations, which were approved unanimously, suggest that bed-in-fill systems only be permitted in Class 1 and Class 2 soils.

In other business Monday night, the health board heard a presentation from lawyer Benedict Del Re on behalf of septic tank contractor Clay-

ton Robinson, who has an ongoing dispute with the health department over its decision not to approve a septic system he installed in the Riverside II subdivision.

Robinson has demanded that the county reimburse him \$1,500 for moving the septic system, saying he was not given proper information by health department personnel before installing the original system. The board has told Robinson that it has no authority to reimburse him or to waive state septic requirements.

In an Aug. 8 letter, Steve Stein-beck, head of on-site wastewater services for the N.C. Department of Environmental Health and Natural Resources, informed Rhodes of his determination that Robinson installed the septic field closer to the edge of the property than was indicated "on the reverse side of the improvement permit.'

Steinbeck said state regulations require that "any septic tank system installed on this lot shall be a minimum of 10 feet from any property line.'

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DOT Plans Signal For Busy **Grissettown Intersection**

A full traffic signal is planned for section does have an accident histoa busy Grissettown intersection that ry and there has been development was the scene of two collisions only there since the highway improvehours apart Labor Day, one of which ment project began. involved New Hanover County In January 1992, four Albemarle

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Sheriff Joe McQueen.

When the four-laning of U.S. 17 to the South Carolina line was under design, DOT planned to install a flashing light at the intersection of N.C. 904 and U.S. 17, rather than the interchange or full signal alternatives sought by some local residents.

However, Doug Bowers of the N.C. Department of Transportation division office in Wilmington said the DOT reassessed the intersection "two or three months" ago as the four-laning project neared completion, and decided a full signal is needed there.

and warranted," he said. "The inter-

residents were killed at the intersection when their car was struck by a dump truck.

The new light will be actuated, responding to detector loops laid in the pavement to let the signal controller know where traffic is, instead of working on a time cycle. Cost should be in the \$25,000 to \$30,000 range.

Bowers said installation of this signal and a signal at the intersection of U.S. 17 and Union School Road are being expedited "as fast as we can.'

There are no plans to install a full "We looked at the traffic volume signal at the intersection of U.S. 17 again and decided a light is needed and Old Shallotte Road, at the south end of the U.S. 17 bypass.



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