



Photo by Holly Edwards

U. S. congressman Mike McIntyre met with Long Beach and Yaupon Beach officials Tuesday to learn about the proposed \$5-million Sea Turtle Habitat Restoration Project. If the project is implemented, 1.2 million cubic yards of sand will be placed along a one-mile stretch of Long Beach.

## McIntyre visits Long Beach to learn about turtle project

By Holly Edwards  
Feature Editor

Congressman Mike McIntyre visited Long Beach Tuesday afternoon to learn about the town's proposed Sea Turtle Habitat Restoration Project.

The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers developed the project after the town submitted information on the effect beach erosion had on nesting sea turtles, said town manager Jerry Walters.

Two nesting sea turtles have been hit by cars and killed on Beach Drive because there was no dune to stop them, 27 sea turtle nests were lost due to erosion or storms last year in Long Beach, and approximately 600 hatchlings were lost because they headed for the street rather than the ocean, said Long Beach recreation direc-

tor and sea turtle program coordinator Tina Pritchard.

The habitat restoration project would involve creating an 11-foot dune line along a one-mile stretch of beach from 58th Street SE to 30th Street SE, Walters explained. Sand would be tapered for three-fourths of a mile on each end of the one-mile stretch, he said.

The project would require 1.2 million cubic yards of sand and cost about \$5 million.

Walters said the federal government would pay about 75 percent of the project, while local and state governments would be required to pay the remaining 25 percent.

"The project is for more than turtles," he said. "It would also help tourism and it would help protect the value of our beachfront property."

aimed at protecting sea turtle nesting areas in a three-linear-mile area centered at 58th Street.

Mayor Altman reported 7th District congressman Mike McIntyre had visited that potential nourishment site Tuesday and had pledged his support to see the project funded. Councilor Horace Collier, who made a recent trip to Washington, said he had been successful in enlisting the support of congressman Walter Jones and senators Jesse Helms and Lauch Faircloth. Faircloth sent a representative to Long Beach last week, he said.

"The Beach Preservation Trust Fund shall function ... as a capital reserve fund, requiring council action for each specific use of funds accumulated in the trust," the resolution establishing the fund reads. "The council may establish committees from time to time to advise council on the most appropriate activities to be undertaken by the trust."

### FIRE AND RESCUE TAX DISTRICTS

Money raised at home should stay at home, council said in directing mayor Altman to write county commissioners in support of a proposal to establish several fire and rescue tax districts in Brunswick County.

Town manager Jerry Walters said the several proposals under consideration by a county fire and rescue tax study committee could have a

"dramatic impact" on fire and rescue funding in Long Beach.

"Options being discussed include a countywide dedicated tax, taxing districts in a variety of configurations and a number of other funding variables," Walters wrote in a memorandum to council.

The manager urged council to go on record before county commissioners receive the study committee report on April 14.

Altman's letter will stress council's belief that any countywide funding should be distributed for base-level services on an equal basis to all county fire departments. Funds generated by fire and rescue district taxes should supplement base-level distributions and should be used in the districts which generated the tax, council believes.

Currently, Walters said, Long Beach pays about \$90,000 annually to support the Long Beach volunteer fire and rescue units, which are actually departments of town government. About ten percent of all property tax generated in Long Beach goes to support these two departments, he said.

In a related matter, mayor Altman was directed to write county commissioners seeking additional funds for upgrading equipment housed in Long Beach for the Brunswick County 911 emergency notification program.

Long Beach serves as a backup to the county's central communications center, but when Brunswick County recently upgraded equipment, Long Beach dispatch center was not included.

## Long Beach strand project

# Mayor says letter info incomplete, erroneous

By Richard Nubel  
Municipal Editor

Long Beach mayor Joan Altman this week said recently published letters to the *Pilot*, concerning a proposed federal beach nourishment program to restore Loggerhead turtle nesting areas, contained "incomplete" and "erroneous" information.

Altman also challenged directly the contentions in a February 26 letter from Long Beach resident Rupert Riley, who ran unsuccessfully to unseat the mayor in the municipal election of 1995.

Writing February 26, Riley asserted a Turtle Habitat Restoration Program beach nourishment project now under study by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers was but a "smoke screen" designed to "con" other levels of government into providing funds for beach nourishment at Long Beach.

"... in reality (the nourishment program) is for economic reasons," Riley wrote.

Altman, responding to Riley in writing this week, says the Turtle Habitat Restoration Program, for which the corps this year was awarded \$500,000 to begin design work, is exactly what the name of the project implies. The project targets beach and dune restoration in a one-mile area centered at 58th Street. The nourished beachfront will taper for one mile in each direction of the target one-mile restoration area.

"The U. S. Army Corps of Engineers is developing a one-time beach nourishment program designed to restore an important sea turtle nesting habitat in Long Beach," Altman wrote. "This very important and innovative project will cost about \$5.3 million to be paid with a combination of federal, state and local dollars. Depending on how the town council decides to fund the local share of the project, the cost to the average Long Beach taxpayer could be around \$30."

Altman says the proposed project enjoys the strong support of local, state and federal wildlife management officials.

Although Congress this year provided half-million-dollar funding for design of the habitat restoration program, no funds have been allocated for construction of the Long Beach project. In all discussion of

## Long Beach turtle efforts are praised

Sea turtle protection efforts at Long Beach are "exemplary," an official of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service said in a March 24 letter to mayor Joan Altman.

John M. Hefner, a field supervisor with the service's Raleigh office, said an earlier letter, critical of Long Beach citing its spring, 1996, dune reconstruction effort, has been reviewed. The matter has been "satisfactorily resolved" as a "one-time misunderstanding" and no fine will be levied against Long Beach.

"We believe the Oak Island Sea Turtle Project, its program leader and the numerous volunteers who work on strandings, education and protection efforts, conduct surveys and move threatened nests, are doing an outstanding job," Hefner wrote.

"In our opinion, the Town of Long Beach's program is exemplary in all respects. You and other town officials are actively pursuing the protection of natural resources, such as nesting sea turtles and the entire beach strand community, dune ecosystems, maritime forests and soundside wetlands within your jurisdiction. You are proactively linking natural resource protection and preservation with educational, recreational and aesthetic opportunities for the general public."

the project, the federal share of costs for construction have been set at \$4 million, but beach nourishment projects have been all but stopped by the Clinton administration.

"Long Beach is a sea turtle sanctuary and has long supported the Turtle Watch program," mayor Altman wrote. "Turtle Watch volunteers attended 94 nests in 1996. About 20 of the nests were moved from the proposed habitat restoration area because there was not enough stable, dry dune for the nests' survival."

In his late February letter, Riley also asserted the Town of Long Beach showed a lack of concern for Loggerhead turtle nesting in May, 1996, when it bulldozed beach sand "during a period of time set aside for turtle nesting protection."

Riley wrote Long Beach had been fined \$2,500 by state coastal management officials for this bulldozing.

Not so, says Altman. "The town has not been assessed a civil penalty (fine) associated with pushing sand in May, 1996," Altman wrote. "The state Division of Coastal Management proposed assessing a penalty because the town pushed sand dunes May 15-22

which violated the town's permit" to move sand on the beachfront.

"On May 8, the town requested emergency permission to push sand because of severe erosion. In previous years, such emergency work was quickly permitted. Because of poor communication between the permitting agencies, the town did not receive a response. By May 15 the town could wait no longer and proceeded with the work. No sea turtle nests were laid during this time."

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## ▶ Long Beach

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government to place sand along the 125-foot span of the Long Beach cabana, one of the last places she and her parents visited while they were living.

Only commissioner Helen Cashwell opposed the resolution creating the trust. She questioned language in the resolution she called "redundant."

The Beach Preservation Trust Fund will allow Long Beach to receive and hold other gifts of money for beach nourishment projects. The idea for the trust was first broached by council at a recent retreat.

"I believe this provides a gear opportunity to build goodwill for the town and to help fund any nourishment project," mayor Joan Altman wrote in a memorandum to council last week. "Preserving the beach is personally important to many people for many different reasons. Those who are financially able would like an opportunity to give more for a cause in which they are interested."

To date, no beach nourishment project has been advanced at Long Beach. In October, 1996, however, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers was handed a \$500,000 appropriation to design a nourishment project

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