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LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL emergency management officials drive the strand at Ocean Isle Beach last Thursday morning to determine where emergency berms should be constructed.

STAFF PHOTO BY RAHN ADAMS

97 Seek Assistance At Local Disaster Application Center

BY RAHN ADAMS

While the turnout wasn't overwhelming, almost 100 applicants sought hurricane recovery assistance at a three-day disaster application center (DAC) last week in Shallotte.

"That indicates that there was enough interest to have it down here," Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan said of the DAC operation, which was set up last Thursday through Saturday in the N.C. National Guard Armory.

However, Logan said the local center's total does not reflect the number of non-resident property owners who possibly were unable to apply for assistance in person because they live elsewhere.

Also, North Carolina victims were able to apply at any application center in the state. In all, 23 counties were declared federal disaster areas, with all of the other counties except Brunswick located in the Piedmont and mountains.

Rowland Faust, spokesman for the Federal Emergency Management Agency, pointed out Monday that individuals who suffered uninsured losses last month as a result of Hurricane Hugo can still apply for disaster relief by calling a Disaster Information Hotline at 1-800-458-5095. The hotline is open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., every day except Sunday. Deadline for application is Nov. 23.

"We're urging anyone who has not applied to get on the telephone and call that number," Faust said. The hotline provides the same services as the DACs.

According to Faust, 97 applicants were registered last week at the Shallotte DAC. Some 37 applications were made for temporary housing, and 38 applications were made for individual family grants.

Small Business Administration applications were issued to five individuals for home and personal property losses and to 26 "businesses," which Faust said also included rental houses.

Forty-one individuals asked for information on disaster unemployment assistance, which must be filed for at the local Employment Security Commission office in Bolivia. Officials said most of the affected individuals here were shellfishermen.

Also, 25 persons sought emergency assistance from the Red Cross, Social Services, and Brunswick County Volunteer and Information Center.

"I think things went smoothly, with the assistance of the federal and state operators and volunteers," Faust said.

Logan also said he thought the operation "went good," even though there was initial concern last Thursday morning that shellfishermen, in particular, would have difficulty returning to the DAC after

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Mother Nature To Decide Impact Of Upcoming 'Spring' High Tide

BY RAHN ADAMS

With this weekend's weather as the key, an astronomical high tide—possibly the highest one of its kind in 10 years—may either help or hurt already damaged beachfront areas in Brunswick County.

Tom Jarrett, chief of the Coastal Engineering Branch of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said Friday that areas in greatest risk of flooding through Monday will be those where dunes were leveled in Hurricane Hugo last month. Under ordinary spring tide conditions, no major problems are anticipated where dunes still exist.

"It (the upcoming spring tide) is high relative to normal spring tides," Jarrett said, "but it won't be that unusual if we don't get any wind with it...the thing that would make this a problem would be if we got onshore winds with it."

But with little or no winds and gentle wave action, the high water could actually bring sand onto the beach from offshore and build up damaged dunes, he added.

Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said Tuesday that extended forecasts—though they

can change quickly—indicate "fairly tranquil" weather through this weekend in the Shallotte area. "At this point, there don't appear to be any significant storm systems that will affect our weather," Canady said.

Tuesday, the National Weather Service's extended forecast, which covered Thursday through Saturday, called for fair weather and light winds in southeastern North Carolina. A high pressure system was expected to form over the southeastern United States Thursday (today) and dominate local weather at least through Saturday.

Normal spring tides occur during the full moon—a time in the lunar cycle when the moon, earth and sun are oriented in nearly a straight line. The full moon this month is on Saturday.

However, another factor contributing to the upcoming astronomical high tides is that the moon is at its perigee—its nearest point to the earth—on Sunday.

"The combination of the moon at its perigee on the 15th and the full moon on the 14th is producing these high astronomical tide predictions," Jarrett said. A similar situa-

tion will occur in November, with the moon at its perigee on Nov. 12 and the full moon on Nov. 13.

According to tide predictions from the National Ocean Service, the highest tides this month in the South Brunswick Islands are expected to occur on Sunday and Monday, around 8:03 a.m. and 8:49 a.m. respectively. The high tides both days are predicted to be 6.5 feet above mean low water or approximately 4.5 feet above mean sea level.

Jarrett said that under "normal" circumstances, the upcoming spring tides probably should be approximately 1.3 feet above mean high water here. Unless they are pushed higher by winds, these tides should be only about 0.1 of a foot higher than other astronomical high tides that have occurred over the past decade, he added.

The high tides on the mornings of Nov. 13 and 14 are expected to reach the same level—approximately 4.5 feet above mean sea level—as the high tides this Sunday and Monday mornings, according to the National Ocean Service.

With county help, several local beach towns Tuesday were to begin

constructing emergency berms on their strands in front of public accessways, to protect against the anticipated high water, said Brunswick County Emergency Management Coordinator Cecil Logan.

As of Monday afternoon, the towns of Holden Beach, Long Beach and Yaupon Beach had asked the county for assistance in pushing up sand with county equipment, Logan said. He added that Ocean Isle Beach indicated it would take care of the work on its own. Logan had not contacted Sunset Beach and other local beaches by Tuesday morning.

Logan indicated that the Federal Emergency Management Agency last week determined that only 1,700 feet of the South Brunswick Islands' 21-mile beachfront were eligible for state- and federally-funded berm construction.

According to Logan, eligible areas included 500 feet at Holden Beach and 1,200 feet at Ocean Isle. Also, 2,400 feet were found to be eligible for the FEMA berm at Long Beach. No sections of any other local beaches were determined to be eligible, he added.

um complex at 46th Street, said Britt.

Although Long Beach qualified for more berm assistance than any other area town, Britt said officials realize the berm won't be enough. "It's better than nothing," he said. "But it's certainly not adequate in itself to protect the beach."

Like officials at other beach towns, Britt said Long Beach Commissioners are looking at several options concerning rebuilding the dune. He said approximately 350 beachfront homeowners have applied for permits allowing them to bulldoze dunes in front of their own property.

Beaches Building Emergency Berms

BY DOUG RUTTER

Three local beach towns planned to finish construction of emergency berms by Friday to protect beachfront property from the astronomical high tides expected this weekend.

Miniature dunes were being built this week at Ocean Isle Beach, Holden Beach and Long Beach in an attempt to protect homes left vulnerable when dunes were flattened in Hurricane Hugo. The towns are paying for the berm projects upfront, but will be reimbursed later by the state and federal government.

After surveying all of the county's beaches last week, engineers with the Army Corps of Engineers and federal and state emergency management officials said the three towns qualified for a total of 3,100 feet of emergency berm. Other local beach towns won't receive any help with emergency oceanfront protection.

The berms, described by some as a temporary pile of sand, will be built about three feet high and 35 feet across the top. They will be created in areas left most vulnerable following the hurricane as a result of damage to structures and previously existing dunes.

Berry Williams, chief of recovery operations for the state, told officials during a public briefing Saturday that specific criteria were used in identifying areas that qualified. In order to be eligible, he said officials had to locate areas where five consecutive houses would be threatened by a five-year storm.

A five-year storm is one that has a 20 percent chance of occurring in any given year. Williams said structures less than 5 1/2 feet above mean sea level would be endangered in a five-year storm.

Based on elevation, he said most homes on the local beaches would not be threatened by a five-year storm. Williams also said the berm

could not be authorized where bulkheads exist.

He pointed out that the same criteria were used in South Carolina, where only 8 1/2 miles of coastline qualified for assistance in building the berm. Funding for the program comes from the federal and state governments, with the federal government covering 75 percent of the cost.

Since the berm was authorized as an emergency measure to protect homes from the higher than normal tides expected this weekend, Williams said it must be built by Oct. 15 for a municipality to be reimbursed.

Holden Beach officials voiced disappointment last Thursday after learning that only 500 feet of their eight-mile-long island qualified for federal aid in building the berm. The stretch extends from 653 to 671 Ocean Boulevard West only.

"That's a shame because our citizens have been sitting back waiting for help," said Mayor John Tandy. "It's pretty much of a shock, particularly when you've been declared a national disaster area."

Town Manager Gus Ulrich said the town contracted with L.M. McLamb & Son Construction of Hickman's Crossroads to build the berm. It will be completed this week, he said.

Engineers found that Ocean Isle Beach qualified for 1,200 feet of emergency berm, from 390 to 434 East First Street. Building Inspector Druid Roberson said workers with MAC Construction began work on the berm Monday and will finish this week.

Mayor Betty Williamson said Tuesday morning she was pleased Ocean Isle qualified for 1,200 feet of berm. But she said officials had hoped for another 400 feet directly west of that designated area where more homes could be threatened by higher than normal tides.

Holden Beach Pair Rides Out Hugo

BY DOUG RUTTER

For Francine Foster, hurricanes are a breeze compared to the frequent bombings she endured as a teenager in Europe during World War II. That's why she didn't think twice about staying at her home on Holden Beach when Hurricane Hugo swept through the Carolinas three weeks ago.

"I don't know if it was a feeling I had or what, but I wasn't really worried," she said in an interview last week. "I guess I was just lucky."

Despite warnings from town officials, Mrs. Foster remained in her home at 217 Gerda Street with her 94-year-old mother, Yvonne Urban, and cat, Pooky, while Hugo's high tides ravaged the oceanfront a few hundred yards away.

Born and reared in Paris, France, the 63-year-old Mrs. Foster said she grew very accustomed to nightly air raids during World War II and wasn't the least bit concerned about last month's storm.

"Hurricanes aren't any worse than being bombed every night for four years," she said. "It's not any scarier."

Her house, located four rows back from the ocean, sustained minimal damage as a result of the storm. Mrs. Foster said wind from the hurricane bent a tree in her yard and blew a few pieces of shingle off the roof.

When the northern edge of Hurricane Hugo passed over Holden Beach, Mrs. Foster said there was very little rain and no flooding at her house. "The wind was very strong," she added. "It was pretty noisy with the wind howling."

Wind or no wind, she said she never had second thoughts about staying on the island and has no regrets. "I didn't think it was that big of a deal, but everyone else seems to think so."

Before the storm hit, she said she emptied about eight inches of water out of her swimming pool to avoid overflowing. As the hurricane approached, she said she went outside several times to see if there was any damage. It was after midnight before she lost electricity at the house.

Mrs. Foster said she was asked to leave the island twice before the storm made landfall the night of Sept. 21. An evacuation team stopped at the house early that afternoon, she said, and the police came by later to urge her to seek shelter inland.

Though she wasn't forced to leave, Mrs. Foster said she did have to provide information about her next of kin. She said officers did not hassle her about staying on the island. "This is a big difference. Back home we had to put up with the Gestapo and all. They didn't give you a choice then."

If there is such a thing, Mrs. Foster could be considered a veteran when it comes to riding out storms. She also stayed on Holden Beach when Hurricane Gloria threatened the Brunswick County coast in 1985.

In 1984, she willingly evacuated when Hurricane Diana was headed for the island. She was still living on the oceanfront at that time, but did not like the feeling of leaving her home behind.

"To me, leaving was worse than staying. I was a nervous wreck worrying about the house and everything," she said. "I had a bigger fit than I did this time."

Mrs. Foster, a full-time resident of Holden Beach since 1982, moved to America in 1950 after marrying a United States Marine stationed in Europe during the war. She and her late husband have one daughter who lives in Wilmington.