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## Beach renourishment plan stands the test of time

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The much talked about Beach Renourishment Plan that has been on the table over a decade still holds up to this day according to a recent review of the plan.

The Town of Fort Myers Beach contracted the Gainesville-based Applied Technology & Management, Inc. (ATM) to review the combined Lee County/Corps of Engineers Beach Plan and provide some feedback regarding the plan's efficiency and suitability in addressing erosion issues on the Beach.

Michael Jenkins, Coastal Engineering Team Leader for ATM, spearheaded the review and says the plan is still as efficient and suitable as it was when it was approved in 2001.

"On a whole it's a solid plan," says Jenkins. "It's standard engineering practice for a beach nourishment plan. If you were going to choose to do a beach nourishment plan it certainly fits the bill."

Jenkins notes that most of the recommendations he made in the review were based on having six more years of data to go off of.

"Its just an update," he says. "Being that the plan was originally approved in 2001 and it's now 2007, we now have six more years of data on which to revisit the plan. In that sense, we had some modifications to the plan that are very minor but are based on the fact that it's six years later and there's six more years worth of stuff to base my opinion on."

One of the questions the town had asked be answered was whether or not the plan was sufficient enough to nourish the beach areas suffering from erosion so that those areas will not revert to their current state for approximately eight years. In his review, Jenkins states that the plan "is of sufficient size and volume density to maintain a wider beach over the eight year nourishment interval."

Jenkins also finds in the review that while some areas of the beach have eroded over the past six years, some areas have actually gained beach. Jenkins major recommendation to the town is based off of those findings.

"The major recommendation is that what we've seen over the last six years is that the beach has, on the whole, remained fairly stable," says Jenkins. "There are two areas that have eroded and have historically eroded, but the middle of the island in some areas has gained beach. That's not unusual, surprising or amazing but the plan, as you would expect, assumes erosion everywhere. Based on the performance of the beach to date, we've recommended as an option, that in those areas that are stable or are growing, you don't necessarily have to put as much sand because they're not eroding. You would still place some sand there but you don't have to make up for the erosion because it isn't occurring."

"That was the major recommended change. Now does that change the whole overall plan? No, but it means that you can meet the goals of the project with strategically placing less sand in certain areas."

Jenkins recommends in his review a net reduction of the amount of sand that would be used to re-nourish the beach by about 67,000 cubic yards (seven percent), which could reduce the cost of the project by more than a half million dollars.

There would be a number of impacts both good and bad for residents if the plan were to be permitted, according to Jenkins.

"The good would be that they would have a much wider beach and a slightly higher beach. So, in terms of beach area, they would have significantly more beach," says Jenkins. "In terms of negatives, the most immediate negative would be issues regarding construction. The current plan has something like a millions cubic yards of sand to be placed. That is a lot of sand. And that requires pipes and trucks and equipment and you know how those roads are. Now you're going to have trucks on those roads. So those are issues. They're temporary but they clearly are issues that they need to be aware of."

Jenkins estimates that if the project were to move forward that it would take about three months to complete and

notes the problems resident would run into with trucks on the roads wouldn't be an everyday thing.

"There's not a lot of road there, that's part of the issue," he said. "But they would be strategic in how they do it."

Another benefit of the plan worth noting according to Jenkins is that the plan is "heavily cost shared by both the state and the Corps of Engineers."

"A significant portion of the cost of the plan is going to be carried by the state and the county," he says. "That cost share is a real nice thing to have. There is a certain amount that will be shared by the town but it is a fraction of the cost that the others will carry."

Now, says Jenkins, it's up to the residents and town council as to whether or not this plan is actually executed.

"Ultimately, it's the town council that has to endorse or not endorse the beach plan," he says. "It's not my place to decide. It's the residents, it's the town council. If you're going to do a plan, this is not a bad one. That decision is really up to the residents and town council though."

Another benefit of the project would be once completed the beaches would be eligible for FEMA money in the event of a major hurricane striking the Beach and causing significant damage. Because the beach would become a "managed beach," Jenkins said, it could receive FEMA funding.

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