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Wabasso beach work may start in 2008

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INDIAN RIVER COUNTY — Residents from John's Island to north of the town of Orchid may be seeing dredge ships placing new sand on their beaches starting in November 2008 if the county gets permits for the largest beach-restoration project so far.

Jonathan Gorham, head of the county's Coastal Engineering Division, on Monday said the project would place about 1 million cubic yards of sand on the 7-mile stretch, reverting it to its 1972 profile, the first one recorded.

Known as Sector 3 on project maps, the area includes Wabasso Beach, the town of Orchid, Disney's Vero Beach Resort and communities such as Summerplace, Sea Oaks, Marbrisa and Baytree.

"Sector 3 is one of the most eroded areas in the entire county," said Bill Glynn, a Summerplace resident and member of the county Beach and Shore Preservation Advisory Committee.

While the new sand project includes Wabasso Beach, this is separate from Public Works Director Jim Davis' effort to replace the Wabasso Beach Park boardwalk and other features that were destroyed by hurricanes Frances and Jeanne in September 2004. Davis said Monday he is still waiting on the state Department of Environmental Protection to issue a permit for that \$1 million task.

The sand project, meanwhile, would be the third time the county will have restored an eroded beach, and Gorham estimated it would cost \$25 million. He said he plans to seek half of the money from the DEP, arguing it would offset the effect of the Sebastian Inlet jetties in blocking south-flowing sand.

The Sector 3 project would follow two other projects:

- A \$6.8 million project in the spring, placing 363,000 cubic yards of sand on Sector 7 — the county's worst-eroded beach — from Treasure Cove south to Floralton Beach.
- An \$8.6 million project in 2004, placing 508,000 cubic yards on the Sectors 1 and 2 beach from Sebastian Inlet south to Ambersand Beach — a project under repair now from hurricane destruction.

This time, Gorham said he hopes he won't have to watch out for nesting sea turtles and beg federal officials for more time to finish the job.

"If we can get early enough notices to proceed, even this large of a project should be able to be built entirely within the 'non-turtle' season," said.



The federally protected sea turtle nesting season is from March to November, during which time beach projects can't operate without special permission, according to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, which monitors turtle conservation.

Gorham found himself negotiating for more time from the agency in May as Great Lakes Dredge & Dock Co. of Oak Brook, Ill., finished the Sector 7 job. Part of the problem, he said, was the DEP not issuing a permit until March after having the county submit more information on the existing rock reefs off that area.

"We would submit applications and they would request more information," Gorham said. "It was rather piecemeal."

This time, he said he and project consultant Michael Walther, president of Coastal Technology Corp. of Vero Beach, met in a telephone conference with state officials in May to nail down what kind of information they will want about the Sector 3 stretch.

Today Gorham is scheduled to ask the County Commission to approve a \$649,840 project, using some \$550,000 from the state, for consultants to map the Sector 3 stretch including sea turtle activity and rock reefs from the shore out 1,000 feet into the ocean.

Overall, records show Coastal Tech and other consultants would be assigned to provide enough information for the DEP to determine the impacts of the proposed sand project on the rock reefs and assure the agency the project wouldn't hurt the environment.

The common theme of county Coastal Resource Manager Jonathan Gorham's requests for beach projects today is underwater monitoring this summer, when the beaches have the best visibility. He is asking the County Commission to approve:

- Paying \$33,000 for Applied Technology and Management Inc. of Gainesville to monitor a \$4.2 million artificial reef the county placed off Castaway Cove in 2004. The state ordered the county to build the reef out of limestone to offset a natural reef off Ambersand Beach being buried by a sand-placement project.
- Paying more than \$293,000 for Coastal Technology Corp. of Vero Beach to oversee continued repair of the hurricane destruction to the Ambersand project.
- Paying almost \$301,000 for Applied Technology to monitor the environmental impact of the recent Treasure Cove-Floralton Beach sand project.