

City of Treasure Island Beach Stewardship Committee

January 12, 2000 1:30 PM

PRESENT: Alan Sansotta, George Greenfield, Robert Minning, Sid Rice, Dennis Velasco, Chuck Coward, Rick Raus, Cliff Truitt; Nicole Elko, USF; Steve Burke, Jim Terry, Pinellas County; Rick McMillan, Corps of Engineers.

The Beach Stewardship Committee meeting was called to order at 1:34 PM by Chairman Alan Sansotta in the City Hall Auditorium at 120 - 108th Avenue, Treasure Island, Florida

Without objection, the regular agenda was set aside in order to receive an update from Mr. McMillan on the Upham Beach dredging.

1. The Corps' dredging contractor had begun excavating and pumping sand from the Blind Pass shoal on Friday, January 7th. The sand discharged onto Upham Beach was observed to be mixed with oil, presumably from the 1993 spill in Tampa Bay. The Corps directed the contractor to relocate to several other spots within the shoal, but attempts still produced oil in the discharge. Dredging took place from as deep as 18 feet to as shallow as 3 feet and the oil seemed to be scattered throughout the sand column. Subsequently, the US Coast Guard ordered the excavation stopped and placed spill containment booms around the area. After a two day delay following the shut-down, the contractor elected to move his equipment to another project in order to remain productive while the situation is reviewed by the agencies involved.

The Corps has expressed a willingness to use this opportunity and their contractor to excavate the sand (and oil) from the shoal and place it in a containment area on the beach so that a State-hired recovery/clean-up contractor can separate, remove and dispose of the oil. However, under agency guidelines the Coast Guard is responsible for all oil spill clean-up and they would have to agree to allow the State to take over that responsibility/liability in order for the work to proceed under the Corps' proposal. That request has been made of the Coast Guard and a draft clean-up plan forwarded, but the decision must be made by a higher headquarters and the time required is uncertain. In the interim, the Corps is scheduling additional soil borings in the area and at Johns Pass to help define the extent of the problem.

Following the status summary, Committee members asked several questions and discussed the situation. Dr. Greenfield asked about the timetable for the decision/work. The response was that it is basically up to the Coast Guard. However, the Corps feels that they have about a two week 'window' of other work for the dredger, at which point they will either need to proceed with the clean-up in Blind Pass, start work in Johns Pass (depending on the borings), or release the contractor to avoid excessive claims/charges for lost time. The project would also be impacted by turtle nesting, with a likely requirement that all oil/clean-up equipment would need to be off the beaches by sometime in April. It was noted that the cost/financial responsibility for any clean-

up is not really an issue. Funding sources exist for the work including the 1993 settlement and the State's regular prevention/recovery trust fund.

Chuck Coward shared his perspectives from discussions last week with the Corps. He said that they felt it was important to "clean" the shoal, because it represents an on-going borrow source for the future which needed to be preserved. Also, it would be easier to deal with the oil on the Gulf beach, under closely controlled conditions -- but, much worse if it ever spread into adjoining canals and passes through some future storm event.

Dr. Truitt asked if the Corps expected any shortfall in sand volume for the beach fill, whether by direct lost from possible clean-up or from excluding portions of the shoal from excavation. Mr. McMillan agreed that there was marginally enough fill identified to start with and this will likely result in a shortfall. There is a possibility that addition volume might be taken from Johns Pass assuming there is no oil found there.

2. Steve Burke concluded with a brief summary of the north groin status. A meeting had been held with the FDEP staff in mid-December and they had approved requested changes to the design of the groin. The contractor expects to begin working the 1st or 2nd week in February, probably with the upland building demolition.

The Corps and County representatives departed for additional related meetings, and the Committee returned to its regular agenda.

3. The draft minutes of the December 8, 1999 meeting had been prepared and previously distributed to the members for review. Without objection, the minutes were accepted as drafted.

4. Dr. Greenfield suggested that we renew our efforts to develop an alternative action plan to replace Johns Pass as a sand source in case the borings/dredging show contamination there as well. There was discussion of using other borrow sources such as Egmont and Pass-a-Grille shoals although any such alternate source likely could not be permitted and substituted in time to meet the Sunset Beach fill need within the upcoming year. This led to discussion/restatement of the need for an Emergency Beach Response Plan to deal with erosion impacts if fill can not be placed in a timely manner. In response, Chairman Sansotta reported that the City Commission had just passed a resolution approving the Committee proceeding with development of such a draft plan as part of our scope of work. Mr. Velasco and Mr. Minning endorsed the need to move forward with the plan and will work on an outline of necessary steps/tasks for discussion at the next meeting.

Dr. Greenfield also supported development of the plan, but stressed the need for something which could be "ready to go" on an even shorter time frame if the need arose. He noted that the actual renourishment interval has never met the 5-year schedule proposed by the Corps in the original design, and certainly not the even more frequent maintenance which our experience suggests is necessary. Ms. Elko observed that in "competing" for sand resources and maintenance attention, the City will always have a difficult case to make because the net change calculated island-wide, at least for the past year, was about 8,000 cubic meters of *accretion*. This compares with Sand Key

and Long Key each of which typically *lose* on the order of 70,000 cubic meters per year. The severe erosion in the Sunset Beach area is offset by equal accretion at mid-key.

Following additional discussion, a consensus was reached to have Chairman Sansotta meet with County staff and try to accelerate review of the USF study and preparation of the necessary FDEP permit application for an intra-island sand-sharing project. As a parallel effort Dr. Truitt will look at the practicality of a geotextile tube project for the worst area of Sunset Beach and outline steps which might be taken to have permits and suppliers ready for such a project to be implemented quickly if the situation deteriorates and other borrow sources/fill projects can not be developed.

5. Ms. Elko reported that the field work portion of the USF study has been completed along with most of the analyses. The final report should be ready for the March meeting. Alan Sansotta has been asked to serve as a co-chair of the Council of Business Leaders of the American Coastal Coalition.

6. Chairman Sansotta concluded by thanking the City Commission for their unanimous support of the Committee's proposal for developing the emergency plan. There were no further member remarks or suggestions.

7. The next committee meeting date was set for February 9, 2000.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 PM.