FLORIDA SHORE & BEACH
PRESERVATION ASSOCIATION

864 East Park Avenue
Tallahassee, Florida 32301

(904) 222-7677 • (904) 561-1172 FAX

CHAIRMAN
Allen Ten Broek
Sanibel Island

VICE CHAIRMAN
James B. Terry
Clearwater

SECRETARY-TREASURER
Tom Campbell
Boca Raton

PRESIDENT
Stan Tait
Tallahassee

DIRECTORS

Bob Clinger
Boynton Beach

Albert T. Cox
Longboat Key

Dr. Robert Dean
Gainesville

Roger W. Dobson
Merritt Island

John MacLean
Venice

Erik Olsen
Jacksonville

Jim Sheffer
Pensacola Beach

Steve Somerville
Fort Lauderdale

EX OFFICIO
Andy Nicholson
Safety Harbor

December 27, 1990

To: Texans Interested in Beach Preservation

From: Stan Tait, President

Re: Beach Conference in Charleston

My heartiest congratulations on your efforts to upgrade the Texas law relating to beach preservation.

In light of your interest in beaches, I want to call your attention to the 4th annual National Conference on Beach Preservation Technology which will be held February 27 to March 1 in Charleston, SC.

This meeting is an excellent opportunity for you to increase your understanding of coastal issues.

In hopes that you can attend, I am enclosing a copy of the conference brochure.

Printed on 100% recycled paper

FLORIDA'S APPROACH TO BEACH MANAGEMENT

By Stan Tait

President

Florida Shore & Beach Preservation Association

The State of Florida has made a calculated commitment in recent years to spend what it takes to preserve its sandy beaches.

It has done so for two compelling reasons:

* beaches are the cornerstone of Florida's tourism industry, generating direct and indirect sales of $10 billion annually.

* beaches are the essence of Florida's out door -- oriented lifestyle -- one simply can't imagine a Florida without sunshine and sandy beaches.

Up to now, the primary tool of beach preservation in the Sunshine state has been beach nourishment.

During the past 15 years, some 100 miles of eroded beach have been restored by pumping sand along the shoreline, creating a wide new beach where one didn't exist before.

In 1975 there was virtually no beach at Miami Beach. Today there is a 200-foot wide swath of golden sand.

Similar beach restoration projects have taken place at a score of resort communities from Captiva Island to Clearwater Beach on Florida's Gulf coast ... from Key Biscayne to Fernandina Beach on the Atlantic coast.

Some $300 million has been spent in federal, state and local money to repair damage to Florida's beaches, much of it caused by human intervention such as the dredging of navigation inlets for recreational boaters.

State law recognizes beaches as a valuable state natural resource. Accordingly, it funds 75% of the non-federal share of erosion control projects.

EROSION PREVENTION

In the years ahead, it's clear that beach nourishment will continue to be an important tool in the state's beach preservation program. But there is already a major shift in emphasis.

The new strategy is erosion prevention.

In fact, the prevention of erosion is the very heart of Florida's 1987 beach management law.

It makes a great deal of sense, at least in Florida.

Studies show that 80% of beach erosion along the state's east coast is caused by navigation inlets. These inlets block the littoral drift of sand -- nature's way of renourishing beaches.

When the littoral drift is blocked, downdrift beaches are starved of replacement sand. The result is erosion which is especially severe immediately below the inlets.

To prevent such erosion, the beach management law requires each inlet district to come up with a program to "bypass" 100% of the blocked sand.

This is a major undertaking. There are 36 maintained inlets along Florida's two coasts. It will probably take until the year 2000 before all inlet districts are in full compliance with the law.

For the first time in history, DNR's 1991-92 budget request asks for more money for inlet management than beach nourishment -- $6.7 million versus $5.9 million.

Other Florida erosion prevention strategies include:

* prohibiting construction of buildings on the beach-dune system because hardened structures can cause local erosion.

* discouraging the construction of sea walls, revetments and groin fields which also can cause erosion.

* rebuilding and revegetating sand dunes and beaches, which help to accumulate wind-blown sand and build up the beach system in a natural way.

* encouraging property owners to erect sand fences to help build up beaches.

Of course, some beach erosion is caused by natural events such as sea level rise and storms. There's not much that can be done to prevent such erosion.

But if man-made causes of erosion can be reduced to a minimum, it should be relatively easy and inexpensive to maintain a healthy beach system with periodic beach renourishment in problem areas.

Happily, the natural background rate of erosion in Florida is low -- averaging only about one foot per year in most areas.

FLORIDA'S BEACH MANAGEMENT LAW

Florida's approach to beach management is different than that of any other state.

It starts with a comprehensive management plan for the state's entire sandy shoreline.

The plan is now being drafted by the Division of Beaches and Shores of The State Department of Natural Resources. It is based on perhaps the most detailed study of shoreline conditions ever attempted in the U.S.

The idea is to come up with the best management strategy for every mile of sandy beach.

Recognizing that coastal conditions vary greatly from place to place, the law gives DNR a wide range of options in management strategy, including:

* restoration and renourishment
* inlet bypassing and feeder beach systems
* armoring -- hardened structures from sea walls to breakwaters (which, based on current policy, will rarely if ever be used because they can cause local erosion)
* dune reconstruction and revegetation
* relocation of structures -- a "retreat" from the beach in those areas where the background erosion rate is high
* setbacks on coastal construction
* acquisition of pristine or relatively undeveloped beaches

In short, DNR is empowered to use whatever management strategy seems best for a particular area of shoreline. and that includes using new technologies of erosion control that may be developed in the future.

Lack of staffing and planning money is delaying completion of the first draft of the statewide beach management plan. But some key elements have been completed, the most notable of which is an identification of potential new beach restoration projects statewide.

One of the most important components of the new law is that is places the over-all direction for beach management in the hands of a single state agency -- the Division of Beaches and Shores. This agency has the clear responsibility to identify needed projects and to set priorities for construction.

This is an important advancement.

In the past, the initiative for recommending beach projects was left solely in the hands of more than 100 coastal city and county governments.

The role of the state was essentially limited to granting project permits and paying (with the federal government) the lion's share of the cost.

The result of such a system was to make a hodgepodge of beach preservation efforts. Some local governments such as Dade County (Miami) and Pinellas County (St. Petersburg) developed comprehensive erosion control programs.

But little or nothing was done in the rest of the state.

The new program is already making a big difference in spreading beach preservation projects around the state.

Since 1987, DNR has set strict priorities each year for all beach restoration and renourishment projects. So far, the Florida Legislature has always honored the DNR priority ranking in its appropriations.

A DEDICATED FUNDING SOURCE

The big remaining hurdle in Florida's beach management program is to find a reliable, consistent funding source.

In late 1989, the Governor and Cabinet, who preside as the "board of directors" of Florida's Department of Natural Resources, appointed a blue ribbon task force to investigate the long-term funding needs for beach management and recommend a dedicated permanent funding source.

The task force issued its report just prior to the 1990 Legislative session. It recommended annual state expenditures of:

* $35 million for repair and maintenance of Florida's beaches

* $35 million for public acquisition of pristine and recreational beaches

The proposed funding source was a five cent increase in the state's documentary stamp tax on deeds and notes.

The Legislature, beset by a revenue shortage, responded by giving a half a loaf. It agreed to spend at least $30 million a year for acquisition under the "Preservation 2000" bonding program for endangered lands.

But it delayed action on the request for $35 million for repair and maintenance.

In the meantime, the Legislature is continuing the old policy of appropriating money for beaches out of general revenue on a line item basis.

In recent years, the Legislature has been allocating an average $15 million per year for beach projects. This is enough to generate some $50 million per year in projects when matched with local and federal funds.

In light of the current economic recession, it is doubtful that the 1991 Legislature will levy the proposed $35 million tax for beach repair and maintenance.

Such action will probably have to wait a year or two. But it will definitely be raised again, because beach proponents agree that effective implementation of Florida's ambitious beach management program hinges on such a dedicated funding source. Only then, as in highway construction, can an orderly, comprehensive program of beach preservation be carried out.

# # #