



Nantucket Rentals Great Point Properties Nantucket, MA

News

- Front Page
Other News
The Arts
Opinion
Sports
Developments
Columns
Classifieds
Archive
Real Estate Guide
Property Profile
Property Transfers
Channels
Advertise
Subscribe
Shopping Page
Advertisers Index
Classified Order
Contact Us
Search Archive

Search input field

Copyright© 2004 - 2007 Nantucket Independent All Rights Reserved



Newspaper web site content management software and services

DMCA Notices

Other News

November 21, 2007

Click ads below for larger version

SBPF reduces project plans by a third
Chooses cobble rock instead of railroad ties
BY PETER B. BRACE INDEPENDENT WRITER

Deciding that a smaller beach nourishment project is better than none at all, the Siasconset Beach Preservation Fund is reducing the scale of its plans by one third.

Originally proposing to mine 2.6 million cubic yards of sand from a shoal three miles off Sankaty Head and rebuild the beach from just north of the lighthouse down to the sewer beds, SBPF, after absorbing scores of critiques, comments and questions in recent weeks, is shrinking its beach rebuilding project in hopes of doing less harm to the environment and appeasing those who oppose the project.

"Listening to people's concerns and feeling that getting some level of protection, i.e., 25 years, is better than no protection despite the goal of trying to build a 50-year protection, we would like to get the project put out there so people can see it and understand it, and when we have future re-nourishment people can accept it," SBPF Executive Director Cheryl Bartlett said before meeting with the Conservation Commission Monday afternoon.

What the reduction means is less sand coming off the bottom of the ocean and a narrower beach, 1.9 million cubic yards instead of 2.6 million cubic yards. Of that, 1.8 million cubic yards would be placed on the beach from just north of Sankaty Head down to the north end of Codfish Park. SBPF would build dunes and plant beach grass in front of Codfish Park and the sewer beds during the first re-nourishment of the beach, which will take place three years after the completion date instead of five.

"The perceived unknown effects are significantly reduced by having that volume of sand removed from the project," said Bartlett.

What she means is that instead of the width of the completed beach extending 213 feet eastwards, it will extend 152 feet seaward. After the expected equalization by waves, currents and wind, SBPF believes the beach under the new plan would only extend 86 feet out into the water. However,

Advertisement for Cowboys Butcher Shop featuring all natural meats, morning coffee, and breakfast sandwiches.

Advertisement for Goldsmiths featuring a diamond ring and a new website with items added daily.

Advertisement for Don Allen Ford featuring a car and a \$15,000 holiday offer.

Bartlett said this reduction in sand would not translate into much of a decrease of cobble habitat offshore.

### NO SIGNIFICANT REDUCTION

Initially, the new sand is estimated to cover 10 acres of cobble and 105 acres in the long-term.

"It doesn't reduce it significantly," said Bartlett. "I want to say five or six acres are covered. We believe that will leave more cobble exposed, as well as not covering cobble."

But Nantucket commercial striped bass and charter fishermen will argue otherwise, fearing the very real likelihood of a near total loss of the most productive fishing grounds on the east side of the island. In past meetings, fishermen told the commission and SBPF that rebuilding the beach with sand off of Sankaty Head is going to smother much of the diversely populated rock cobble habitat where they catch a majority of their fish.

Coastal Engineer Mark Ritz of Epsilon Associates did say that the densest concentration of cobble habitat will be covered as a result of beach nourishment.

"You keep on stressing the point of the low percentage of sand and the low percentage of cobble that is going to be covered," said commercial fisherman Bob Rank at the continuation of SBPF's public hearing before the Conservation Commission on Monday afternoon. "The importance of the cobble is not what you're going to cover, but the type you're going to cover. That is about 90 percent of where I fish, that macro algae area."

Island bird expert Edie Ray said at the meeting she was skeptical of the SBPF's cobble habitat analysis.

"I don't really think in my mind, that this is a true representation of what a cobble habitat looks like," she said.

### ALGAE AND CRUSTACEANS

Since the last series of ConCom meetings in September, SBPF's coastal engineering consultants at Epsilon Associates of Maynard, Mass. did video, side-scan sonar and offshore dive surveys on Sept. 20 and 21 to learn the density of the cobble areas and what lives in them.

Ritz told the commission that the densest cobble coverage is 1,000 feet offshore, mostly in the central and northern sections of the project area where the most macro algae is found, and that little or no cobble exists 300 to 400 feet offshore. The total amount of cobble in the project area is

**Bargain:**

1. At a price advantageous to the buyer.

Don't you just love a bargain?

2 for 1 Dinner Entrees You're gonna love 'em

**EVEN KEEL CAFE**

508-228-1979  
Espresso...Breakfast...Lunch...Dinner...Bar

Maury People Sotheby's Gary Weiss

RENOVATED

ADIRONDACK

ADIRONDACK

ADIRONDACK

ADIRONDACK

ADIRONDACK

ADIRONDACK

Why US? Why Better? Why Happens? Why Fly?

**1-800 LIMOS TO LOGAN**

(1-800-546-6786)

OR

www.LIMOSTOLOGAN.com

[System and Method for Display Ads have a Patent Pending. Click Here for More Information](#)

275.3 acres, or 9.57 percent of the project's footprint, with coverage in these areas running anywhere from zero to 64 percent of the bottom. Ritz estimated that 26.3 acres of this habitat would be covered with sand from the project.

This unique habitat 500 to 1,500 feet offshore is created as the bluff migrates westward, dropping rocks of varying sizes onto the beach, which eventually erode into the ocean. Living there are brown and red macro algae, along with barnacles and bryozoans - all species that thrive in swift currents and heavy wave action, explained Epsilon Biologist Chris Vaccaro.

Further offshore in the 2,000-to- 2,500-foot range are sponges. Living among the cobble rocks are rock, lady and spider crabs. Winter flounder breed here and juvenile lobster use the rocks for cover; squid schools look for food and striped bass and bluefish seek out cobble habitat to feed.

### **ONE-YEAR COBBLE STUDY**

To better compensate for the loss of cobble habitat, SBPF is also altering its cobble mitigation plan by ditching its original proposal to use 28,000 concrete railroad ties to create an artificial reef off Quidnet. Instead, it will replace the railroad ties with rocks around 2 to 20 inches in diameter to create a much more realistic copy of the cobble environment, Ritz said.

But before it does that, SBPF is proposing to do a one-year mitigation pilot study in an area recommended by fishermen to get a sense of the types of organisms that will colonize a manmade cobble habitat. The site was also chosen because it has water temperatures, depths and light penetration that are similar to the cobble habitat in the project area.

SBPF will slowly dump its cobble rocks from a barge into two areas, one at 600 to 800 feet offshore and the other, 1,200 to 1,400 feet off the beach. Also, said Ritz, they will drop several reef balls - perforated concrete balls used to simulate reefs in Florida - to see what will live in and around them.

During the one-year study, three random one-acre spots out of the total 68 acres of the study area will be chosen for surveys in different time periods: right after the cobble is dumped in the water, six months later, 12 months later and after major storm events. Epsilon will take readings on water temperature, water depths, and colonization of marine species and then do side-scan and video surveys.

The commission, though it had lots of questions and comments, appeared to like the change in cobble replication and the concept of SBPF's pilot mitigation study.

"You're definitely heading on the right route in changing the materials to natural materials," said ConCom member Sarah Oktay, who suggested that surveys be taken on a monthly basis.

At the next meeting on Nov. 26, SBPF is expected to talk about waivers it is asking for, regulatory issues and more about its mitigations plans. ConCom Administrator Dirk Roggeveen said there will be at least three more meetings after Nov. 26, on Dec. 3, 5 and 10, but no times and venues have been chosen.

At the end of the hearing process, members of the public will get their chance to not only ask more questions, but to give their thoughts on the project, something the public does not get to do during

an applicant's presentation of a proposal. |