


3.18.14 #27

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE (DEI)
Administrative and Business Support
Engineering and Technical Support
Transportation and Stormwater
Water and Sewer
Solid Waste
Airport

MEMORANDUM

TO: David Scott, Executive Director, DEI

THROUGH: Richard Coates, Director, Transportation & Stormwater Division
Kelli Levy, Natural Resources Section Manager

FROM: Andy Squires, Coastal & Freshwater Resources Manager 

SUBJECT: Federal funding for beach nourishment

DATE: March 10, 2014

I attended the American Shore & Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) Summit in Washington D.C. February 25-27, 2014. After hearing the various discussions among several of the nation's coastal managers and scientists, a decrease in United States Army Corps of Engineer (USACE) funding available for beaches as well as other civil works projects may very well become a reality over the next several years.

The USACE is currently evaluating their national priorities under increasing budgetary constraints. Given the expected annual budgets, USACE officials realize that meeting the nation's operation and maintenance needs alone are a huge financial challenge and beaches may not be at the top of the list. Consequently, they are very reluctant to initiate any new projects or new funding commitments called "New Starts." With the 50-year federal authorization of Treasure Island ending in 2019, and with authorizations of Long Key and Sand Key beaches set to expire in 2030 and 2043, respectively, continued Federal funding may decline in the near term and end upon the authorization expiration dates.

Officials at USACE headquarters noted as part of their budget tightening strategy, they are transitioning into a watershed-based budgeting process. Their advice to proponents of beach nourishment is to bundle beach and other nearby projects together to maximize benefits. For example, dredging the channels and inlets for navigation and flushing improvements, and then using the dredged material to nourish the adjacent Gulf beaches. Pinellas has been doing this when sediment volumes in

nearby channels and inlets become sufficient and require dredging to improve navigation. USACE officials also strongly recommended continued and more frequent visits to USACE headquarters by ASPBA members so the needs of beach advocates are heard and clearly understood. ASBPA members currently visit USACE headquarters once each year and intend to increase visits to three times per year beginning immediately.

As you know, Pinellas has benefitted for many years from reliable federal support for nourishing our three developed barrier island beaches of Sand Key, Treasure Island, and Long Key. This was largely due to congressional earmarks thanks to late Congressman Bill Young. Over \$100 million of federal funds have been put to good use in maintaining the Pinellas Gulf beaches over the last 40+ years. The economic impact from beach visitors to Pinellas County in 2009 show beach visitor spending was \$1.4 billion, the economic impact was \$2.8 billion, 35,850 jobs were supported, and \$88.3 million in taxes were collected. Furthermore, from a national perspective, for every federal dollar spent on beach nourishment, \$320 in tax revenue is collected. Spending on beach nourishment provides an excellent return on investment.

The competition for federal beach dollars is tightening, thus the need to increase local beach funding contributions to maintain our beaches may be a reality moving forward. This is not an emergency situation yet. Nonetheless, it is recommended that Pinellas continue efforts to: 1) support outreach focused on USACE officials and other Federal agency stakeholders, 2) educate our Federal and State legislative delegations on the importance of our beaches, and 3) begin identifying new non-federal revenue options in the next few years to fill this potential funding void.