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Mother Nature TAKES HER TOLL

By Sandi Schwartz

This winter season was one of the worst periods as far as storm frequency in over a decade, according to Dr. Stewart Farrell, Director and Founder of the Coastal Research Center at Richard Stockton College. He leads the effort to track the damage caused by the recent storms, from the remnants of Hurricane Ida in November to the back-to-back snow storms in February.

The November storm produced sustained winds of 30 to 40 miles per hour with 8- to 15-foot swells. As a result, the south end of Sea Isle City experienced substantial beach erosion. In Strathmere, large volumes of sand were lost from the beach, berm, and sand bar. Following the November storm, about 300,000 cubic yards of sand out of

2010 Beach Renourishment Project is considered an emergency, so the towns will be providing the funding up front and then seeking reimbursement from the state and federal governments. Sea Isle City will be requesting a 75 percent reimbursement from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) in its fiscal 2011 shore protection budget. Unfortunately, FEMA does not provide funding to repair federal beach projects that fall under the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In addition, the state recently reduced its Beach Replenishment Fund by millions of dollars. Town officials decided that they could not wait for help from the federal or state governments. Avalon will continue to meet with officials in Washington, D.C. to

The hydraulic beach fill will involve pumping in dredge sand from Townshend Inlet to Sea Isle's south end and Avalon's north end. Avalon is expected to receive approximately 500,000 cubic yards of sand that will be placed on beaches from 9th to 26th streets. Sea Isle City will receive approximately 700,000 cubic yards of sand that will be placed from 73rd to 94th streets. The cost for each cubic yard of sand is \$7.02.

According to Avalon's engineer Tom Thornton, the project should take place between mid-May and June. He is hopeful that it will be completed before the summer tourism season begins. The town to start first will have more of a guarantee that the dredging will be done before the first vacationers arrive,



a million were no longer in place in Strathmere.

As a result of this damage, Sea Isle City and Avalon are teaming up to fund a joint beachfill project that will protect the beach and ensure that residents and visitors can enjoy it. Dr. Farrell said, "Sea Isle and Avalon have chosen to be proactive as a result of the storm damage and are already working on a spring renourishment project." The Spring

make sure that emergency funding is placed in the USACOE's budget.

"This is a monumental project," explained Scott Wahl, Avalon's public information officer. "The scope of this beachfill is much larger than the one done this past spring. It will help protect Avalon from storms as large as a category 2 hurricane. Right now the north part of Avalon is not protected, so this is a major public safety concern."

which is critical since several blocks of the beach will need to be closed in order to pump in the sand. At this point, the towns have left it up to the contractor to decide where the project will start. The decision may ultimately come down to a coin toss.

The Avalon Borough Council formally awarded the contract to Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company, LLC, of Oak Brook, IL. Avalon has authorized about \$4.5 million for its

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share of the emergency beachfill, while Sea Isle City will pay \$5.9 million. Both towns have applied for the necessary permits from NJDEP. Sea Isle City has applied for a permit from the Army Corps, while Avalon already has a permit from the agency and just needs it to be modified for the project to proceed.

By working together, the two towns will be able to save money since they are sharing the mobilization cost totaling about \$1.982 million. Ultimately, they will be able to get more sand for less money.

Fortunately, Strathmere did not experience as much storm damage as

the other coastal communities. The recently completed beachfill project led by NJDEP's Bureau of Coastal Engineering provided a substantial defense against the storm, limiting erosion of the dune system. It choked off a secondary channel that was forming, greatly reducing erosion and any possible damage from the storms. Dr. Farrell pointed out that the project was responsible for protecting about eight homes in Strathmere from being destroyed. Fortunately, there was only some minor street flooding after the storms. According to Benjamin Keiser, NJDEP coastal engineering manager, town officials have provided very posi-

tive feedback about the project and are pleased with how it performed during the multiple storms.

Targeting Strathmere, Sea Isle City, Stone Harbor, and North Wildwood, the NJDEP project was developed to administer beach nourishment, shore protection, and navigational dredging to protect life and property along the coast, preserve coastal resources, and maintain safe and navigable waterways. In Sea Isle City, over 394,000 cubic yards of sand were brought in between 1st and 15th streets and 40th to 52nd streets. The Strathmere beachfill involved 891,000 cubic yards of sand distributed from

Seaview Avenue to Williams Avenue, from Webster Avenue to Polk Avenue, and in a natural area. The cost of the Strathmere work was just over \$6 million; the state was responsible for \$4.79 million of the total while the town paid about \$1.2 million. The total cost for the beachfill in all four towns came to over \$20 million.

Sandi Schwartz is a member of the National Association of Science Writers & D.C. Science Writers Association and occasionally writes on issues pertaining to science and weather for the Seven Mile Times and Sea Isle Times.

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