

GROUPS WANT SEA OF CHANGE FOR BEACH PROJECTS

Protesters point out dangers, economic impact

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BY NICHOLAS HUBA
STAFF WRITER

LONG BRANCH — Several environmental groups protested outside the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association Fall Conference at the Ocean Place Resort urging for changes to be made in the plans for beach replenishment.

Members of the groups held signs ranging from "Do not Super Size our beaches" to "One size does not fit all."

"Renourishment has led to unwise development," said Bill Rosenblatt, chairman of the National Board of Directors of the Surfrider Foundation. "We now have more houses, more condominiums and more business built in the most vulnerable areas of the coast."

Over the last year, concerns have been raised about the beach replenishment project that is scheduled to start on Long Beach Island in the coming weeks.

Residents and various civic groups have raised concerns about the size of the project and the impact that it will have on tourism and the environment. The Army Corps of Engineers, the agency in charge of the project, said the project is expected to cost \$71 million, but some have questioned that figure.

The project is going to have a negative impact on the surfing community, said Andrew Mencinsky, executive director of the Surfers' Environmental Alliance.

"This project will make surf shops go out of business," Mencinsky said. "For 10 years Surfers' Environmental Alliance has tirelessly worked to educate the Corps, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, state and local officials about the great recreational and economic resource of surfing and the damage that has occurred by means of fill."

During the course of the 45-minute rally, Josh Basile, a 20-year-old Maryland resident who was paralyzed by a shore break on a Delaware Beach that recently went through a beach replenishment project, spoke.

"They need to put signs warning swimmers of the increased dangers of replenishment steeper profiles," Basile said. "A vacation should not include a trip to the hospital or life-altering injury."

Some question the environmental impact of the project.

"Dredge and beach fill renourishment is not an ecosystem-friendly management strategy," Rosenblatt said. "It is not consistent with recommendations of either the U.S. Oceans Commission or the Pew Oceans Commissions."

The groups wanted to meet with members of the association and talk to them about changes that could be made to the project.

American Shore and Beach Preservation Association is a group that was formed in 1926. The group wants to protect and improve healthy and diverse recreational opportunities; manage, protect and enhance environmental resources; encourage responsible and sustainable economic development; preserve aesthetic values; reduce damage from natural hazards and human activities; and mitigate human impacts to natural processes.

"There is no reason that we can not work together," said Harry Simmons, president of the association. "I think that we all want the same thing."

The group allowed members of Surfrider and the Alliance to come and speak to the members during one of the meetings at the conference. During the course of the meetings, the association approved a measure calling for ASBPA to work together on developing different project types.

"ASBPA invites the Surfrider Foundation to proactively participate with the ASBPA and government at all levels in the formulation of appropriate means for protection and management of beaches and associated resources of interest to Surfrider," the measure stated.

Tom Campbell, a member of the ASBPA, said the groups need to continue to work together.

"Do not look at this group as your enemy," Campbell said. "We're willing to work with you through this process."

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