



Replenishment protest

Shore preservation event draws surfer group picket

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Published: Tuesday, October 10, 2006

LONG BRANCH — The slogans said it all: Toddlers holding signs reading, “Steep Beaches are Dangerous Beaches,” environmentalists picketing to “Reform the Army Corps” and moms wearing T-shirts emblazoned with the golden-arches logo and the message “Do not Supersize our beaches.”

The group, led by the Surfrider Foundation, of about 30 shore residents, surfing and fishing advocates and ecological preservationists stood Monday on the Promenade outside the Ocean Place Resort and Spa. Inside, a collection of coastal experts and board members were setting up exhibits and holding meetings in preparation for the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association's 80th fall conference.

The two activist groups gathered at the same location for what seemed to be a shared cause: beach preservation. So why was one — the Surfriders — protesting the other?

“For over a decade, New Jersey and the nation have been struggling with questions regarding shoreline management, property and infrastructure protection,” Bill Rosenblatt, the Surfrider's board chairman, told the crowd. “Throughout that decade, those who would like to be seen as the ‘champions of protection’ have only been willing to consider one option — large-scale dredge and fill beach renourishment.”

For the foundation, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' method of pumping offshore sand onto beaches has a cookie-cutter mentality that kills fishing holes, sandbars and surfing waves. This is particularly a threat on Long Beach Island, according to Rosenblatt, who called the upcoming project there his “biggest concern.”

For the association, however, the corps' method represents the best way to replenish and protect against storms for all types of beachgoers.

“The surfers are very vocal here today, but there are a lot of others that need to be thought of as well,” said ASBPA President Harry Simmons as he observed the

protesters on the Promenade. “It's entirely possible that some parts of beaches are great for surfing and not so much for laying a towel down.”

Simmons insisted that the two groups were not at odds with each other. To prove it, he invited Rosenblatt and Surfers' Environmental Alliance Executive Director Andrew Mencinsky inside the resort ballroom to speak to the association's board.

There, Rosenblatt, wearing flip-flops with his sport coat, tie and khakis, described a cyclical pattern between beach replenishment and beach development, with one feeding off the other. He also cited more than 30 surf-breaks between Long Branch and Point Pleasant that have been destroyed by such projects.

Next was Mencinsky, who explained that the protest was necessary because the Corps of Engineers has insisted — and the ASBPA has accepted — the dictum that no replenishment plans can be modified.

“So our options are, we can go after the appropriations, we can litigate or we can do things like this,” he said.

Eventually, Surfrider Chris Manthey, who was to give a presentation at the conference later in the day, spoke up. He emphasized that the state and federal approach to Long Beach Island will only increase a wave climate already three times stronger than that in Long Branch.

When all three finished, ASBPA board member Tom Campbell clarified a point that seemed to get lost at times amid the dialogue.

“We are not the Corps,” he said. “Don't look at this group as your enemy.”

He added: “The Corps' programs can be changed. We just need to approach it the right way.”

Meanwhile outside, the rally continued. Dorothy Jedziniak, a Ship Bottom homeowner, was speaking to the crowd about her fear that the jetties on the island will disappear following replenishment.

“They're going to cover our beautiful big rocks,” she said. “It'll look like the Sahara Desert out there.”

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