

Army Corps Says More Sand For Montauk Beaches Is Possible



By Michael Wright

Representatives of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hinted to East Hampton Town officials and residents of Montauk on Wednesday night that they may reverse course and recommend that Montauk's beaches be broadly reconstructed as part of the \$1.3 billion Fire Island to Montauk Point Reformulation Project, or FIMP.

Army Corps project leaders said that their latest thinking about how to best protect downtown Montauk from severe storms is "in line" with an approach that consultants for the town recommended in a report presented to the federal engineers on Wednesday.

That report called for more than 1 million tons of sand to be deposited on a 6,000-foot-long stretch of Montauk's beachfront to build a 50-foot wide beach and another half-million tons brought in every three to four years to offset future erosion.

The Army Corps had recommended in the draft version of the FIMP work plan released this summer that only that about 180,000 tons of sand be deposited along the existing beachfront every three to four years to counter erosion in front of a sandbag revetment the Army Corps built across 3,000 feet

of the downtown last winter and spring.

Since that draft proposal, known as a “feeder beach,” was first presented, town officials have expressed outrage that the Army Corps was not proposing a full-scale beach “nourishment” project that would restore a broad, healthy beach profile, both above and below the surface of the water. Such a project, they have said, is what the Army Corps had led them to believe in 2014 would follow as part of the eventual FIMP work if they approved the revetment project as a stopgap.

The Army Corps said the proposal presented by the town, which was drafted by Westhampton consulting firm First Coastal, seems to both find a middle ground between the scope of the two approaches, and also present convincing evidence of the economic value of downtown Montauk and its vulnerability to devastation from a severe storm.

“It won’t be a beach nourishment project, but it will be more similar to a beach nourishment project than what was in the draft report,” said Lynn Bocamazo, one of the dozen Army Corps engineers helping present the FIMP plan in Montauk on Wednesday night.

Steve Couch, the Hurricane Sandy recovery manager for the Army Corps, said that the Corps could not yet commit to what the extent of work their own recalculations will justify but said that the engineers are embracing the understanding that a broader project is warranted.

The Army Corps' original project plans would have cost about \$2 million to \$3 million every four years, funded entirely by federal money. The larger project could cost upward of \$15 million for the initial phase and another \$8 million for each of the quadrennial maintenance projects.