

New Detail on Seawall

Up to 3,000 truck trips to take sand to Montauk

By David E. Rattray | February 5, 2015 - 1:15pm



The Army Corps's initial work zone will extend east from South Edison Street (seen above in December 2012, two months after Hurricane Sandy) to the Atlantic Terrace resort. *Doug Kuntz*

A United States Army Corps of Engineers erosion-control project planned for the Montauk oceanfront will be larger than previously thought and could require as many as 3,000 truckloads of sand, according to bid documents.

Additionally, with a planned start date for its first phase in March looming, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has not issued the necessary permits.

Potentially necessary East Hampton Town permits have yet to be secured, something a spokesman for the Army Corps said would be the responsibility of the contractor performing the work.

According to specifications prepared by the Army Corps, an artificial dune will be built from thousands of plastic-fabric sandbags and will be covered by mostly imported sand extending more than 100 feet from its landward side, reaching beyond the Atlantic's mean high water line in some places. Earlier, the fill had been described as extending 50 feet. Much of the material to be used for this will come from a remote sand mine and will not be taken from the beach itself.

In a new addition, the project will also incorporate long, sand-filled "geo-tubes" at the seaward and landward edges of the sandbag structure.

"It is unfortunate that the level of detail in the specifications was not available to the public and town officials before it went to bid," Jeremy Samuelson, the executive director of the Concerned Citizens of Montauk, said yesterday.

“There are aspects that we have serious questions about that no one was aware of,” Mr. Samuelson said. These include the addition of permanent, raised walkways that cannot be removed in the event of a storm, and the removal of native primary dune to accommodate the sandbags, he said. Questions also remained about the apparent lack of a plan for stormwater on the inland side of the new dune.

The project is slated to begin in mid-March, with seven-day-a-week activity on a first section ending by May 21. The initial work zone will be from about the road end at South Edison Street and run east to the Atlantic Terrace resort, a span of about 1,200 feet.

The balance of the project, which is expected to begin in the fall, will extend from South Edison Street to about 240 feet west of South Emery Street. Under the terms of the bid documents, the contractor could return to the Montauk beach as early as Oct. 1. No work will be allowed over the Columbus Day weekend.

In all, 3,200 feet of shoreline will be encased with sandbags and buried under the new berm.

At a projected maximum, some 102,000 cubic yards of sand will be required, a portion of which will come from the site itself, Chris Gardner, a spokesman for the Army Corps, said on Monday. Earlier project descriptions had estimated the total amount of sand necessary at about 45,000 cubic yards; that figure grew after a series of storms, including a bad one in December, ate away at the beach.

Money for the estimated \$8.9 million undertaking comes from a 2013 Hurricane Sandy relief bill passed by Congress.

Along with the additional beach fill, the documents describe three raised pedestrian walkways that will be built over the new, 15-to-16-foot-above-sea-level dune. These will be at South Emery Street, South Embassy Street, and South Edgemere Street. East Hampton Town officials have asked the Army Corps and the state D.E.C., which is taking the lead on the project, if lower roll-out wooden walkways could be used instead.

Mr. Gardner said that the Army Corps and the D.E.C. would consider acceptable alternatives.

No walkways or stairs are depicted in the Army Corps plans to provide access to the beach directly from the motels and several condominiums there. Neither are there pedestrian access provisions in the documents for the area covered in the first phase of the project, including a town-owned pathway at Surfside Place. This would effectively prevent guests at several properties from easily reaching the beach, unless additional walkways were built up and over the artificial dune.

Four-wheel-drive vehicle accesses are planned for South Essex Street and South Edison Street. One at South Edgemere Street will be eliminated.

A thickness of about three feet of sand will be placed on top of the rectangular sandbags, which will be stacked step-like in a sloped configuration. The resulting surface is to be planted with beach grass and surrounded with snow fence. Public access to the work area and a 500-foot-wide buffer around it will not be allowed during construction.

The bid specifications for the project are for an initial 50,000 cubic yards of mined sand to be purchased from upland sources. There are several sand mines on eastern Long Island, including the Sand Land Corporation’s facility north of Bridgehampton and East Coast Mines in East Quogue.

At a capacity of 25 cubic yards of sand for a large dump truck, the project will require about 2,000 trips to deliver the minimum 50,000 cubic yards of material to Montauk. Large trucks could be

available, but it is not clear if they would be permitted on the area's roads. The first phase of work would require about a third of the total be delivered.

The bid documents allow the contractor to purchase up to an additional 26,000 cubic yards of sand, which would require about another 1,000 loads to be hauled over the local roads. As much as 26,000 more yards of sand would be gathered and re-used on site.

“What will the impacts be to our local infrastructure? Where is the sand coming from? How big a staging area is needed and where? The people and the business community of Montauk deserve to know this type of information before we sign off on this carte blanche,” Mr. Samuelson said.

By comparison, a 2013 town project to rebuild the beach at Ditch Plain required 3,500 cubic yards of sand, about 140 truckloads.

With the contingency volume contained in the Army Corps' project bid documents adding up to 76,000 cubic yards of mined sand, the downtown Montauk project would generate more than 20 times the truck traffic, roughly 3,000 round trips.

“It's fair to say that the community had more information about the infinitely smaller dune restoration project at the former East Deck Motel than we have about the number of truck trips and staging associated with the Army Corps project,” Mr. Samuelson said.

East Hampton Town's shoreline is divided into four categories for regulatory purposes. In the category, or zone, in which the Montauk effort is being planned, erosion control structures, including geotextile tubes and sandbags, are prohibited.

In a statement yesterday Mr. Gardner said, “The state of New York and the Town of East Hampton are close partners in the project and we are coordinating closely with them on all aspects of this shared project as we move forward together.”

“There potentially may be localized building permits that the contractor would coordinate,” he said.

According to earlier statements from Army Corps representatives, the sandbags would be removed as part of the Fire Island to Montauk Point Reformulation project if and when work on that begins. However, maintenance expenses and the sandbags' removal before the larger Fire Island to Montauk work starts would be the responsibility jointly of the Town of East Hampton and Suffolk County.

A representative of the Department of Environmental Conservation office handling the project did not return a call seeking comment.