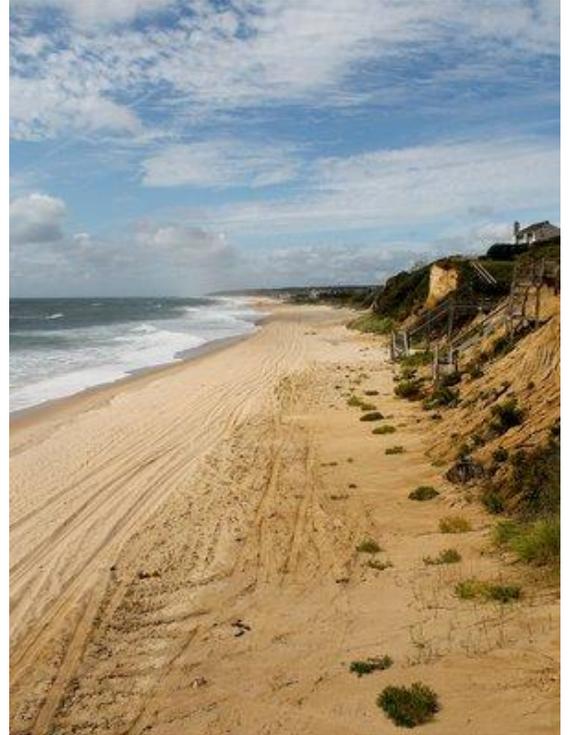


# \$1 Billion Army Corps Coastal Resiliency Plan Does Not Include Major Beach Rebuilding In Montauk

**By Michael Wright**

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will direct more than \$1.1 billion to bolster the south shore of Long Island against future storms, including federal funding for projects on Dune Road in East Quogue, Sagaponack and downtown Montauk, according to Army Corps documents.

But a draft of the work plan, which is expected to be made public later this month, does not include a proposal for a comprehensive beach rebuilding project in Montauk. East Hampton Town officials said they had been told to expect funding for a more permanent solution prior to their approval of a much criticized sandbag seawall erected across the front of the downtown business district last winter to temporarily protect oceanfront hotels from strong storms.



An executive summary of the Army Corps plan, known as the Fire Island Inlet to Montauk Point Reformulation Study, or FIMP, indicates that the Army Corps has proposed depositing more than 150,000 tons of sand on the beaches of downtown Montauk every four years, for the next 30 years, to widen the beaches and ensure that the sandbag revetment remains covered by artificial dunes.

But East Hampton officials said this week that when they approved the revetment project in 2014, the understanding was that the Army Corps would be coming back once hundreds of millions in federal Superstorm Sandy recovery and resiliency funding was made available.

“The concept was that they would rebuild the dune and come back under FIMP and build a substantially wide beach,” Supervisor Larry Cantwell said. “They’re doing major replenishment projects in other areas similar to Montauk, and all we’re getting is 120,000 cubic yards of maintenance sand. And there’s nothing at all for Ditch Plains.”

A spokesperson for U.S. Representative Lee Zeldin said this week that the congressman will be

working to get a more comprehensive sand replenishment project in Montauk added to the final FIMP work plan. “This is definitely something that our office will continue to work with the local elected leaders and community on, and push for within the final draft,” Mr. Zeldin’s communications director, Jennifer DiSenna, said in an email this week. “This is just the initial draft plan.”

The Army Corps had said in various earlier versions of FIMP study—which has been under way, intermittently, since the 1960s—that a broad sand nourishment project in Montauk would not be cost-effective.

The construction of the sandbag revetment required about 110,000 cubic yards of sand, approximately 165,000 tons, including the sand that was used to fill the 13,000 sandbags buried in the beachhead. The Army Corps plan calls for an additional 120,000 cubic yards, about 180,000 tons, to be deposited in front of the sandbag revetment on a regular basis.

The revetment work was roundly criticized by environmentalists and community groups who said that the sandbag wall would jeopardize the existence of the beach in the long term, and that sand-only projects were the only solution, with a long-range view toward moving development away from the sea.

“It took us 50 years to back into our current coastal policy. It’s going to take several years to figure out how to pull our community back from the shoreline,” said Jeremy Samuelson, executive director of the Concerned Citizens of Montauk. “Large-scale pumping of sand onto the beach will buy us the time while we move toward a broader solution. Montauk is going to have to spend the next two years to convince the Army Corps to radically increase the volume of sand they are talking about for our beach.”

This spring, the Army Corps also unveiled a proposal to replenish sand on the beaches along Montauk’s north-facing shoreline west of the Montauk Harbor inlet. That project calls for the construction of three small jetties along the Soundview and Culloden Shores waterfront to help keep sand deposited on the beach in place.

While the bulk of the funding for FIMP will go to nourishing beaches in Fire Island and to raising and relocating houses in flood plains, the draft work plan also calls for a project to bolster ocean dunes in East Quogue and, possibly, the raising of Dune Road along a short stretch of chronically flooded roadway.

The FIMP project plan will bring far more federal funding to bear than originally allotted in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, Mr. Zeldin’s office said in the release. The Army Corps had originally pledged to dedicate about \$700 million to the projects in the FIMP plan.