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# Montauk to get coastal restoration project

Montauk's coastline, where the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to bring in 450,000 cubic yards of sand to widen a vulnerable stretch of oceanfront beach and dunes. Credit: Newsday/J. Conrad Williams Jr.

**By Joe Werkmeister** [joe.werkmeister@newsday.com](mailto:joe.werkmeister@newsday.com) Updated October 16, 2023 10:19 am

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plans to start a long-awaited coastal restoration project next year to widen a vulnerable stretch of oceanfront beach and dunes in downtown Montauk.

The \$11.2 million federal project — part of a larger Fire Island to Montauk Point initiative — involves dredging 450,000 cubic yards of offshore sand to be placed along the beach that runs parallel to South Emerson Avenue.

The goal is to reduce flooding risks from severe storms and tidal surges that have become more frequent due to climate change, according to the Army Corps of Engineers.

The Fire Island to Montauk Point project, which regained traction after Superstorm Sandy in 2012, is a \$1.7 billion coastal storm risk management project that covers 83 miles along Long Island's Atlantic coast and dates back to the late 1950s.

East Hampton Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc described the work as an intermediate step to give downtown Montauk “breathing room” for when the ocean bears down on nearby commercial properties.

“It’s like putting a speed bump in front of Mother Nature,” he said.

The project comes eight years after the Army Corps of Engineers completed an emergency stabilization of the Montauk shoreline after Sandy caused severe erosion.

East Hampton officials announced earlier this month that the Army Corps of Engineers had selected a contractor, Great Lakes Dredge and Dock Company, to perform the work.

The Army Corps of Engineers expects work to begin in late winter or early spring. Town officials said they are optimistic it will be completed before next summer.

David Freudenthal, who chairs the environmental group Concerned Citizens of Montauk, described the project at an Oct. 3 town meeting as a “critical, medium-term step.”

He said his organization has been working with the town since 2013 to develop a long-term solution for preserving Montauk's coastline, an effort that has included the 2022 adoption of the Coastal Assessment and Resiliency Plan.

It provides recommendations for town officials on policies and procedures to increase resilience in the face of climate change.

In 2016, the Army Corps of Engineers reinforced the Montauk shoreline with sand-filled geotextile bags, work the agency said held up as intended. But annual maintenance costs, which the town splits with the county, run over \$1 million, according to Van Scoyoc.

That stabilization project was intended to buy time until this larger sand replenishment could be done, according to the Army Corps of Engineers and town officials.

"We didn't know it would take this long," Van Scoyoc said. "But we're very excited it's coming now."

The Army Corps of Engineers intends to complete an emergency sand placement project on the Fire Island's western end before starting the Montauk dredging. Officials and residents of Fire Island recently urged the Army Corps of Engineers [to extend the project](#) to communities farther east.

In Montauk, periodic beach replenishment will take place every four years for three decades after the initial project is finished, officials said.

The town said maintenance costs will be shared by the Army Corps of Engineers, New York State and local municipalities, "pursuant to a future agreement."

In the meantime, each season that passes without a major storm battering downtown Montauk brings a sigh of relief for locals.

"It's kind of like playing Russian roulette," Van Scoyoc said. "Any given year we can have a major, catastrophic storm."

## Protecting the shoreline

- The Fire Island to Montauk Point plan dates back to the 1950s and is intended to manage the risk of coastal storm damage on the Atlantic coast.
- The latest federal project involves dredging 450,000 cubic yards of offshore sand and placing it along a downtown Montauk beach.

Source: East Hampton Town/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

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