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LONG ISLAND / **TOWNS**

## Tobay Beach restoration: 90,000 tons of sand is on the move to protect vulnerable shoreline

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### 'More resiliency from future storms'

The Army Corps of Engineers' dredging project has begun at Tobay Beach. Oyster Bay Town officials said this will result in a bigger, better beach that's more storm-resistant. NewsdayTV's Virginia Huie reports. Credit: Rande Daddona; File Footage

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A federal contractor began delivering hydraulically dredged sand to Tobay Beach this week, an effort that town officials and experts said will harden the shoreline against severe weather and protect key infrastructure.

Tobay Beach has been [repeatedly battered](#) by storms in recent years, mirroring an [islandwide issue of beach erosion](#) made worse by climate change-induced rising sea levels and more severe weather events. Town officials

said replenishing that coastline, part of a series of beaches that line Long Island's South Shore, is integral to defending against myriad environmental dangers.

"It protects the structural integrity of Ocean Parkway, which is one of the most important thoroughfares for transportation, commerce and access to all our beaches," Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino said in an interview. "It also provides for strengthening the integrity of the barrier island."

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The Town of Oyster Bay entered an agreement with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to have about 90,000 tons of sand pumped to the Massapequa beach from the agency's \$37 million Fire Island Inlet project to maintain a federal navigation channel. Town officials said moving the sand will cost \$3.1 million, with the state reimbursing \$1.7 million of that total.

## Fortifying Tobay Beach

- **The Town of Oyster Bay entered an agreement** with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to have about 90,000 tons of sand pumped to the beach from a Fire Island Inlet project.
- **A roughly 7-mile pipe** is being used to transport sand from that project the beach.
- **The process uses large hoses** and temporary pump stations to send the slurry — a combination of seawater and sand — to the shoreline.

"Long Island communities are all too familiar with the destruction caused by extreme weather," Gov. Kathy Hochul said in an emailed statement. "In addition to New York's actions to combat climate change, we are taking action to ensure our communities, homes and infrastructure are resilient and will withstand the coastal storms happening now."



Sand is moved Tuesday at Tobay Beach. Credit: Rande Daddona

## **Sand is moved 7 miles**

Last June, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers hired Virginia-based Norfolk Dredging to dredge the federal channel. Tom Bruno, a project manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said at Tobay Beach Tuesday morning that a roughly 7-mile pipe is being used to transport sand from that channel to the beach.

The process uses large hoses and temporary pump stations to send the slurry — a combination of seawater and sand — to the shoreline. Because that sand is denser than sand the town typically purchases, it is expected to create a more resilient beach, Saladino said.

“The weight of the water packs the sand much more densely and therefore it holds up better,” he said.

Town officials said the process of moving the sand will last multiple days. Bruno said sand delivery on Tuesday was temporarily paused as the contractor dealt with an equipment issue.

Saladino said the town expects the project will raise the elevation of the beach and create a 100-foot run of sand between Tobay Beach's pavilion and shoreline during average tide.

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Sen. Chuck Schumer, in an emailed statement, said the project “is a fantastic example of cutting the red tape and finding solutions to restore the shoreline, protect critical infrastructure, and strengthen defensive dunes.”

Oyster Bay has repeatedly seen Tobay Beach suffer significant erosion in recent years. Last year, a community-led effort to plant dune grass to stabilize the beach was dashed just days later when a storm rolled through and washed the plants away, [Newsday reported](#).

To combat the persistent erosion, the town has annually purchased 33,000 tons of sand from a Middle Island sand mine, officials said.



Oyster Bay Town Supervisor Joseph Saladino with other officials at the news conference Tuesday. Credit: Rande Daddona

## **Bolstering the buffer zone**

Susan Kilgore, a geologist and an assistant professor at Adelphi University, said eroded beaches leave homes and other infrastructure vulnerable to storms and high tide, worsened by a warming planet.

“These beaches and the dunes and any of the wetlands that are beyond the beaches are extremely important for essentially a buffer zone from the ocean and places where people are building,” Kilgore said.

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If beaches are eroded, water can more easily reach beach dunes, which are “the last line of protection,” she said.

The local, state and federal partnership is still a short-term solution, officials, advocates and experts say, and more permanent measures need to be developed to protect shorelines.

Kay Tyler, executive director of Concerned Citizens of Montauk, a nonprofit, said beaches along the South Shore deal with similar erosion issues. In Montauk, a single storm can wipe away sand replenished in the offseason, she said.

Efforts like beach plantings and other methods of utilizing green infrastructure help improve the chances of staving off erosion, she said. Still, inclement weather can cause problems.

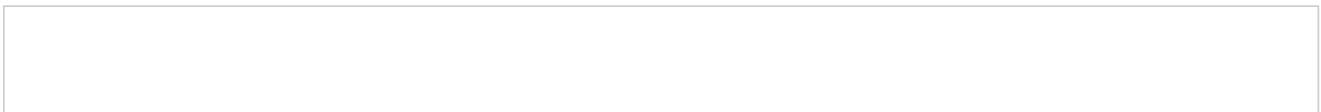
“The key is not to have any storms,” Tyler said facetiously.

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Last February, East Hampton’s town beaches received dredged sand from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said Rebecca Holloway, the nonprofit’s manager of environmental advocacy. She said it will take some time to see how the sand fares against the elements.

While denser sand is often better for resiliency, Holloway said, “offshore dredged sand or mine sand, regardless — it’s going to be a short-term solution.”

Saladino called on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to help develop more permanent measures to protect the beach, including the creation of jetties to capture sand that would otherwise drift away.



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