

THE BEACH PRESERVATION PROBLEM

As many of you know, our island continues to experience beach erosion in some areas. In August several of our Board Members and some owners, met on the beach with Bill Eiser, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM). OCRM, is the agency responsible for making decisions on what can and can't be done on the beaches in S.C. At that time Mr. Eiser said that the only thing that could be done was to obtain a permit for sand bagging and sand scraping at the close of turtle-nesting season in November.

At our Owner's Meeting in November, Debbie Hoffman discussed the beach erosion on Harbor Island. She was on the Board when the Hunting Island groin project was approved, and announced a meeting for concerned owners at our club the following morning.

Sunday morning after the Owners' Meeting, many of our members met at the club for the purpose of organizing a group to demonstrate our concerns to state agencies. A petition was initiated for the purpose of sending to these state agencies. Board members at that meeting assured the group that the Board would consider establishing an official committee at the next Board Meeting.

At the December 3, 2007 Board Meeting, the Beach Preservation Committee was officially established, with Debbie Hoffman as Chair. The Board moved that a letter be sent from the Board to Bill Gaines, Director of S.C. Parks, stating our concerns. Copies were to be sent to all other involved public officials.

A December 14 article in the Beaufort Gazette informed the public that Hunting Island had applied for a permit to draw sand from its south and north ends, the north end spit being sand between Harbor and Hunting Island. The article stated that any opposition to the permit must be received by December 26. The Beach Preservation Committee met December 15 and decided the letter from the Board should include opposition to this permit. The firm that applied for a permit on behalf of SC Department of Parks for re-nourishing Hunting Island beach was the same firm that stated in correspondence in 2001, how important the sand from the area of the north spit was to the continued viability of Harbor Island. This coupled with other environmental concerns constituted the core of our opposition. Those letters were mailed the following week.

On December 20, Phil Gains, Director of S.C. Parks, called our Board President. In that phone conversation Mr. Gains said that he wanted to make sure that the Board knew that he understands our objections. He said that he would contact the engineer to re-evaluate the situation and look at other options. That same afternoon the HIOA Office received an email from Mr. Gains stating, "We are withdrawing the north end borrow area from our permit request. Thank you for your input and patience during this process."

Thanks to a lot of hard work from the committee under Debbie Hoffman, and to the Board and our Office Manager, Mary Boykin. The committee will continue to investigate the effect that Hunting Islands groins might have on Harbor Island.

The Board approved Mark Harbaugh's request to send a request to OCRM for a permit to allow owners on the beach front to scrape sand in front of their own property at their own expense. The permit will also allow HIOA to repair the beach end of the HIOA boardwalk, at HIOA expense. Mary Boykin completed and filed the request for the permit.