

Status of the Construction of the Sand Bag Revetment at the Point
August 5, 2011

While the Village was very pleased with the outcome of the special meeting held last week by the Coastal Resources Commission which granted the variance request to install sand bags as a temporary measure to slow the un-natural rate of erosion; we are disappointed to report this week that the installation of the sand bags at the Point has not yet begun.

The following steps must occur before construction can commence. First, the state's Attorney General's office issues the official finding from the hearing. This final order was just issued on Thursday. Secondly, the Village must also have any required permits in hand before starting construction. The only permit required will be issued by the Army Corps of Engineers once they obtain the final order from the state. To issue their permit, the Corps must notify the US Fish and Wildlife Commission, the NC Wildlife Resources Commission and the NC Division of Water Quality to request input. If all agencies report back with no concerns or objections, the permit can be issued. Permitting could be delayed if any of these agencies have objections.

To expedite this project, the Village contacted the Corps in May to inform them of our intentions regarding the sand bag revetment wall and to request their assistance throughout the process which included notifying the commenting agencies ahead of time to alert them of the urgency of the situation given the unprecedented rate of erosion occurring at the Point. In the interim, the Village had also prepared the bid request for the installation of the sand bag wall, so this could be issued immediately if the variance request was granted. The Village received 4 bids in response to this notice this week and a contractor has been selected and authorized to begin purchasing the required materials. The contractor is ready to begin constructions as soon as the Village is authorized to proceed.

The Village just learned late this week that one of the three commenting environmental agencies did have concerns with the construction of the sand bag wall occurring during the official turtle nesting season. The BHI Conservancy is working with the Village to propose an acceptable means of resolving the issue, running heavy equipment on the beach, raised by this agency. The Conservancy is also expressing its full support of starting the project immediately. The consequence of delaying the sand bag wall would cause far more irreplaceable loss of dunes and damage to dune ecosystems as well as threaten existing turtle nests in adjacent beaches due to the severe non-natural erosion.

Representatives from all three of the environmental agencies, the Corps, the Village and the Conservancy are scheduled to meet Monday morning on Bald Head to review the proposal and inspect the site. The hope now is for a positive outcome from this meeting, no further concerns or objections. If an agency is still not satisfied, and requests a formal consultation with the Corps, this could add several weeks to the process of obtaining a permit. Therefore, it is difficult today to predict a construction start date.