

Helping one beach project with erosion may hurt another

By **THE PALM BEACH POST**

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The flashpoint is coming for a controversial Palm Beach County beach restoration project. A law suit would be the worst outcome.

Since 1992, and especially since 2006, the county has tried to get more sand onto a roughly 1-mile, condo-lined stretch of Singer Island south of John D. MacArthur Beach State Park. Because the ocean bottom is relatively hard, pumping sand onto the beach isn't an option - not that it would be a good option to begin with.

So the county devised a system of 13 breakwaters, to disrupt wave action that strips away sand. The Surfrider Foundation correctly objected, arguing that the structures would harm sea turtles, endanger boaters and swimmers and generally be a waste of money. For similar reasons, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection indicated that the agency would not grant a permit for the project. The DEP and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers must bless the project.

The revised project includes 11 structures, all underwater. County Commissioner Karen Marcus, who represents Singer Island, and Surfrider Regional Manager Erica D'Avanzo said this week that the DEP soon may issue a permit. The Corps of Engineers will take comment until next week.

Surfrider also opposes this project, maintaining its argument that the county should take a regional approach to the problem of erosion between Jupiter and Lake Worth inlets. Commissioner Marcus says, "Doing nothing is not an option," because condo residents then would build seawalls.

Surfrider successfully challenged a restoration project in Palm Beach, then began working with the town on a better alternative. Ms. D'Avanzo said a law suit if the Singer Island project gets permits is "an option." We still agree with Surfrider that a wider approach stands a better chance of success, because working with nature usually is more effective than working against it.

- Randy Schultz,

for The Palm Beach Post Editorial Board

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