



Barrier Islands & Beaches

frontline news

No ➤ The Newsletter of the Barrier Island Workshop

Carter Orders Study of Barrier Islands

President Carter's May 23rd message to Congress on the environment calls for a plan to protect coastal barrier islands. With the urging of the Barrier Islands Coalition and the Council on Environmental Quality,

President Carter included the following statement in his 1977 Environmental Program:

"Coastal barrier islands are a fragile buffer between the wetlands and the sea. The 189 barrier islands on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts are an integral part of an ecosystem which helps protect inland areas from flood waves and hurricanes. Many of them are unstable and are not suited for development, yet in the past the federal government has subsidized and insured new construction on them.

Eventually, we can expect heavy economic losses from this shortsighted policy. "About 68 coastal barrier island are still unspoiled. Because I believe these remaining natural islands should be protected from unwise development, I am directing the Secretary of the Interior, in consultation with the Council on



Environmental Quality, and state and local officials of coastal areas, to develop an effective plan for protecting the islands. "His report should include recommendations for action to achieve this purpose."

The fact sheet accompanying Carter's message focuses on some of the Federal programs encouraging development on barrier islands. Specifically, the President mentioned "federally permitted or subsidized roads, bridges, and sewers, with the result that millions of people have been subjected to the hazards of hurricanes, and to property losses from the erosion and other physical changes that are characteristic to barrier formations. These hazards and losses have, in turn, invited substantial federal spending

Notice to Island Watchers

If we hear from you more often we can make this newsletter better. The purpose of "Barrier Islands and Beaches" is to provide a means of communication between island watchers. When something important or exciting happens on your island, write in, and let us know, and we'll pass the information along. With your help we can get the newsletter out on a regular schedule and keep it close to the grassroots.

St. Phillips and the Coast Guard

AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIZEN ACTION
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St. Phillips Island is located offshore from St. Helena Island in Beaufort County, South Carolina. It is a completely undeveloped island and is ecologically unique because of its alternating sand ridges and marshlands. This valuable habitat is unusually sensitive and is threatened with destruction if the island is developed.

The fight over St. Phillips is now in its fourth year. Early in October the U.S. Coast Guard released the revised draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of a proposed bridge and resort development at St. Phillips Island. The Environmental Defense Fund (EDF), as well as other organizations, has fought development of this pristine island because of certain destruction of wetlands and wildlife habitat and the certain risk of massive storm flooding.

Bridge permits are granted, or denied, by the Coast Guard. EDF maintains that the Coast Guard has the responsibility to discourage - unsound development on barrier islands. Hearings were held in 1974 on a draft EIS that was considered inadequate. Since that time new information has come to light and the development plans have changed. EDF believes another public hearing must be held.

If you are interested in the upcoming St. Phillips Island bridge permit proceedings you can receive a copy of the new EIS by writing to: Commander W.H. Brogdon, Jr., Seventh Coast Guard District, 51 SW

First Avenue, Miami, Florida, 33130. You may also request another public hearing and ask that you be notified of where and when it is scheduled.

For further information, write: Langdon Warner, EDF, 1525 18th St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Barrier Islands Coalition

Represented on Federal Work Group

Larry Rockefeller, Chairman of the Barrier Islands Coalition and a staff attorney at the Natural Resources Defense Council, is representing BIC on the Barrier Islands Work Group. The Work Group was established in response to President Carter's request for a plan to protect barrier islands. Other members of the 10-person group include representatives from the Office of Coastal Zone Management, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, the National Park Service, and the Council on Environmental Quality.

The task of the Work Group is to investigate measures necessary to protect coastal barrier islands from unsound development. Specifically, the group must come up with a definition of barrier islands, inventory and map resources, and define problems and policy concerns as well as alternative strategies addressing the problems identified.

Changes in the standard definition of barrier islands have been proposed by the Work

■ CARTER

for seawalls...and beach restoration projects that perpetuate more settlement and then more federal investment, while causing the continuous loss of valuable and unique resources."

Also accompanying the Environmental Message are executive orders on Floodplain Management and the Protection of Wetlands, which have significance for barrier islands and beaches.

Group. The proposed definition has been expanded to include spits, proximal wetlands including tidal flats, estuaries to the landward side of the barrier islands, and mangrove islands.

The Work Group has come up with three categories of barrier islands, each with separate problems and policy concerns. For developed islands, concern centers on what the appropriate Federal response should be, as well as what the setback line should be for new construction. Issues of importance for unspoiled-protected islands identified by the Work Group include public access, permissible uses, management alternatives, and controlling land use on adjacent land. The major policy concern for unspoiled-unprotected barrier islands is how to protect them and assure wise use of these remaining areas.

The Barrier Islands Work Group plans to integrate the findings and recommendations for the three categories of problems before formulating policy recommendations.



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The information for the "Frontline News" was obtained from Island Watchers, as well as from press releases and newspaper clippings.

HATTERAS ISLAND, NORTH CAROLINA (a)

The National Park Service appears near to granting a special use permit for a water-supply pipeline from Buxton to the Village of Avon that would be subsidized by the Farmers Home Administration of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. The permit for the proposed pipeline, which would cross Cape Hatteras National Seashore, may be issued without the sewage-treatment and development control conditions which the National Park Service previously considered necessary to protect the quality of seashore resources. The construction of the Buxton to Avon waterline would facilitate the development of 600 additional home sites in an area already facing water pollution problems, further threatening the quality of the groundwater supply.

SIESTA KEY, FLORIDA (b)

Midnight Pass, between Casey Key and its northern neighbor, Siesta Key, (both on the Gulf coast of Florida) is shifting its position to the north at an amazing pace. "Casey Key is the benefactor of the shift, as it has accreted some 500 feet of new northern beach. Mote Marine Lab of Siesta Key finds that it has lost some one thousand feet of beach and the Pass is currently within a short

BRIGANTINE ISLAND, NEW JERSEY (e)

The Youth Conservation Corps and the Atlantic Audubon Society arranged to have people guard tern colonies to prevent damage from pedestrians in Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge last summer. In the posted colony, 25 birds were observed flying from the same colony that had fledged only four or five birds the previous year. The Atlantic Audubon Society is trying to get permission to post and monitor every "least tern" colony from Ocean City to Long Beach Island.

CASEY KEY, FLORIDA (f)

Island Watcher Tom Cross reports that "Loggerhead turtles have been nesting on many spots along Casey Key." Caretta Research, Inc., a marine turtle conservation project, keeps close watch on the nesting sites to insure protection from predators and human intervention.

Also on Casey Key, an International Shorebird Survey is being conducted by Mrs. Flannigan.

BLOCK ISLAND, RHODE ISLAND (g)

(Sachem Pond Barrier)

Block Island has been chosen by the Energy Research and Development Administration as one of the first sites for testing a 200 kilowatt wind turbine electrical generator.

FIRE ISLAND, NEW YORK (i)

Joe Zysman, Director of the Fire Island Natural Area Committee, and an island watcher, reports that the National Park Service has made public its final plan for the island, together with the accompanying Environmental Impact Statement. Fire Island parallels Long Island.

GALVESTON ISLAND, TEXAS (j)

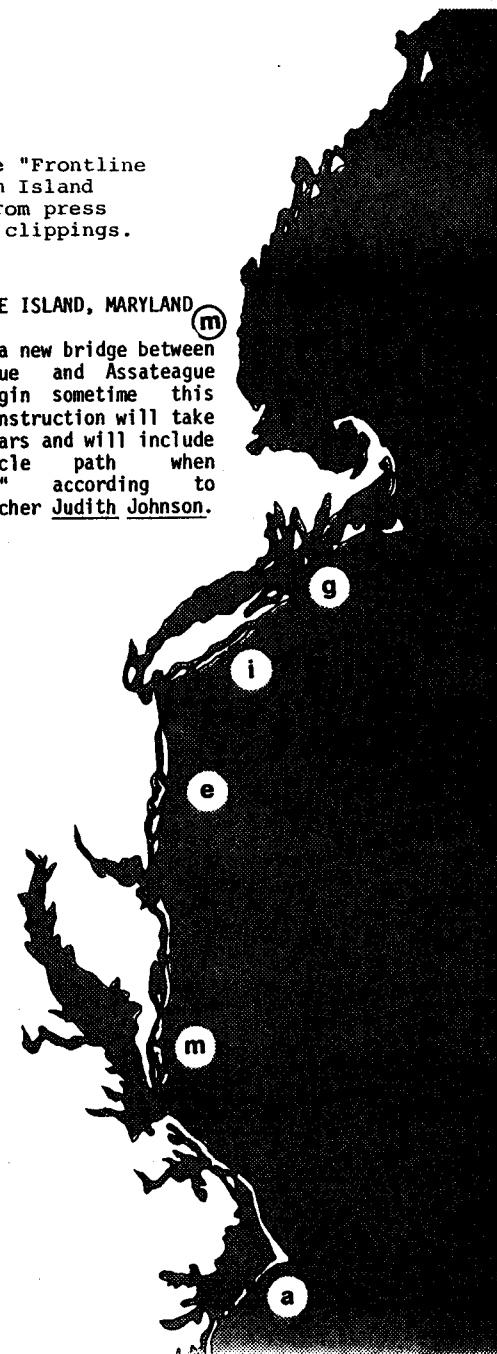
Galveston Island faced a water shortage this June. Brought on by a broken water line and unusually hot, dry weather, water usage increased 25% over May. One of the two water lines that link Galveston with the Texas mainland has been broken since March.

EAST TIMBALIER ISLAND, LOUISIANA (k)

Gulf Oil Corporation has applied for a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers to install an eight-inch gas pipeline at natural ground elevation across East Timbalier Island, and below the bed of East Timbalier Bay. Local residents have suggested that the proposed pipeline should be rerouted to an exclusively underwater route, to avoid damage to vegetation and nesting gulls and terns.

ASSATEAGUE ISLAND, MARYLAND (m)

Work on a new bridge between Chincoteague and Assateague should begin sometime this year. "Construction will take about 2 years and will include a bicycle path when completed," according to Island Watcher Judith Johnson.



marine tanks.", writes Tom Cross, of Earth Metabolic Design Lab, Inc.

HORN ISLAND AND PETIT BOIS ISLAND, MISSISSIPPI (c)

President Carter, in his 1977 Environmental Message, stated that he "will soon submit a proposal to designate as wilderness, portions of Gulf Island National Seashore in Mississippi and Florida." The proposal has not yet been released, pending review by the Office of Management and Budget.

LOVERS KEY, FLORIDA (d)

Brad Patton informs us that Lee County, Florida, may be able to purchase several beach recreation areas with the help of Federal funds. Lovers Key (currently owned by a corporation and available for purchase) has come under consideration. If Lovers Key is acquired, the owners of nearby Black Island may donate about 1,000 feet of beach front between Lovers Key beach and Carl Johnson Park, making a long, continuous gulf beach from one end of the Key to the other.

Project is a viable alternative to oil-fired power plants in small, relatively isolated communities. Block Island has a year-round population of 600, but energy use rises in the summer with the arrival of vacationers.

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, TEXAS (h)

According to Island Watcher Mary Lou Campbell, the annual turtle watch camps were set up on the beaches of South Padre Island again this April. Volunteers protect the nests of the endangered Atlantic Ridley Turtle (which migrates on land to lay eggs) from predators and human traffic. Mrs. Ila Loetscher, of South Padre Island, is licensed to collect and care for the injured and sick sea turtles that the watchers find.

Mrs. Campbell also reports the occurrence of raw sewage spills from a new sewer system completed this fall.

A bill banning vehicles from Texas beaches has died in the state legislature. Beach driving has been legal in Texas since 1959, when the state granted counties the right to prohibit beach traffic. State Senator Jack Ogg, of Houston, proposed a bill to prohibit driving on Texas beaches.

The bill was withdrawn by Ogg when Galveston Senator A.R. "Babe" Schwartz threatened a filibuster. Ogg has instead proposed a resolution to create a committee to study the recreational, ecological, safety, and economic aspects of public beach usage. In the meantime, all but a 4-1/2 mile stretch of the 60-mile long Padre Island National Seashore is open to motor vehicle traffic.

