

Opinion

MY VIEW

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The following My View is written in response to "Voices Away from the Bluff," featuring Jay Starr, published in the November 21 issue of The Nantucket Independent.

Mr. Starr's interview contained several observations and misstatements I would like to clarify.

1) Most of the terraces have been replaced with a new design that minimizes loss of material during storms; terracing efforts will be discontinued once beach nourishment is complete. The Codfish Park dewatering system appears to have contributed to accretion in the area and will be utilized in conjunction with beach nourishment.

Mr. Starr questioned the status and efficacy of the Codfish Park dewatering system. After it was upgraded in December 1999, this system operated concurrently with significant accretion of the beach (approximately 120 feet), until it finally had to be turned off because so much sand had accreted that its discharge pipe was buried. Once it was turned off in 2002, the trend of erosion resumed. Given its previous positive impact on maintaining and increasing beach width, the Codfish Park system (which will be reburied by the beach nourishment project) will be utilized as part of the beach nourishment project to slow erosion and lengthen the time between renourishments.

Mr. Starr also expressed questions about the terraces and their performance during Noel. The

majority of the terraces have been repaired with a new design that requires fewer posts and maintains more fabric on-site during storms. As a result, during Noel, none of the jute material was lost from the terraces repaired with the new design. There is also a smaller area of terraces that are constructed from an older design; these terraces were damaged and SBPF promptly dispatched crews to clean-up all debris. SBPF is currently working with the local Conservation Commission to amend the permit for this smaller area to the new design. Once the new design is approved for use in this area as well, we expect that loss of material during storms will be minimal. Finally, we've modified the project design to eliminate terraces from use once the beach nourishment project is completed. We will instead stabilize the bank by adding additional sediment to bring it to a more gradual angle and planting it with native vegetation.

2) Beach nourishment projects over 100 times larger than 'Sconset have been successfully undertaken.

Mr. Starr is mistaken in his statement that "This size of a project has *never* been done before." Beach nourishment projects exceeding 2.6 million cubic yards (note that the initial 'Sconset project is now proposed at 1.8 million cubic yards) are undertaken quite regularly. Entire islands have been constructed in Dubai in the hundreds of millions of cubic yards. While this is an extreme example, our coastal engineers from Coastal Planning & Engineering have built numerous projects of several million cubic yards including Panama City at 9 million cubic yards, Chaland Headland Restoration Project at 3.4 million cubic yards, Western Fire Island and Fire Island Pines Renourishment Project at 1.1 million cubic yards, Anna Maria Island at 2 million cubic yards, and Longboat Key at 1.8 million cubic yards, to name a few. While these projects have different wave climates, nourishment intervals, specific site conditions, and fill material, the underlying principles remain the same when designing a beach project. The engineers are experienced in this field and have analyzed and presented the expected performance of the project. The proposed

project has been reviewed by independent coastal engineers and found to follow standard coastal engineering practice and be a feasible project.

3) Public access will be provided to the nourished beach, during and after construction.

Unlike many coastal communities where the landowner's property includes the beach, Sconset Beach is primarily owned by the Town of Nantucket, as well as by private individuals and organizations. SBPF is requesting permission from each property owner; in return, SBPF is committed to providing improved public access to the beach. We expect that the nourished beach will provide enhanced recreational opportunities for the general public, as well as restore and create nesting habitat for protected shorebird species. Further, most of the beach will be open to the public during construction, as the contractor will only close off the immediate construction area for safety reasons.

4) SBPF has proposed multiple actions to avoid environmental impacts, as well as mitigation measures for unavoidable impacts.

SBPF has benefited from several decades of experience in evaluating the potential impacts of beach nourishment projects to avoid impacts and propose appropriate mitigation for unavoidable effects. Steps that will be taken to avoid potential impacts from the project include (1) adherence to a time-of-year restriction which will prohibit construction between January and June when cod, winter flounder, and other sensitive groundfish species spawn in the area; (2) establishment of an exclusion zone that protects the densest hard bottom habitat from being exposed to the dredge and its propellers; (3) implementation of a shellfish harvest and relay program to remove and re-seed surfclams and other commercially important shellfish from the borrow site prior to dredging; and (4) posting of a marine protection observer on the dredge during construction to prevent potential negative interactions with protected marine species. For unavoidable impacts associated with habitat burial, SBPF has proposed recreating hard bottom habitat at a site selected by a local fishermen group. While there has been a substantial amount of scientific study showing that mitigation of marine habitats has a high degree of suc-

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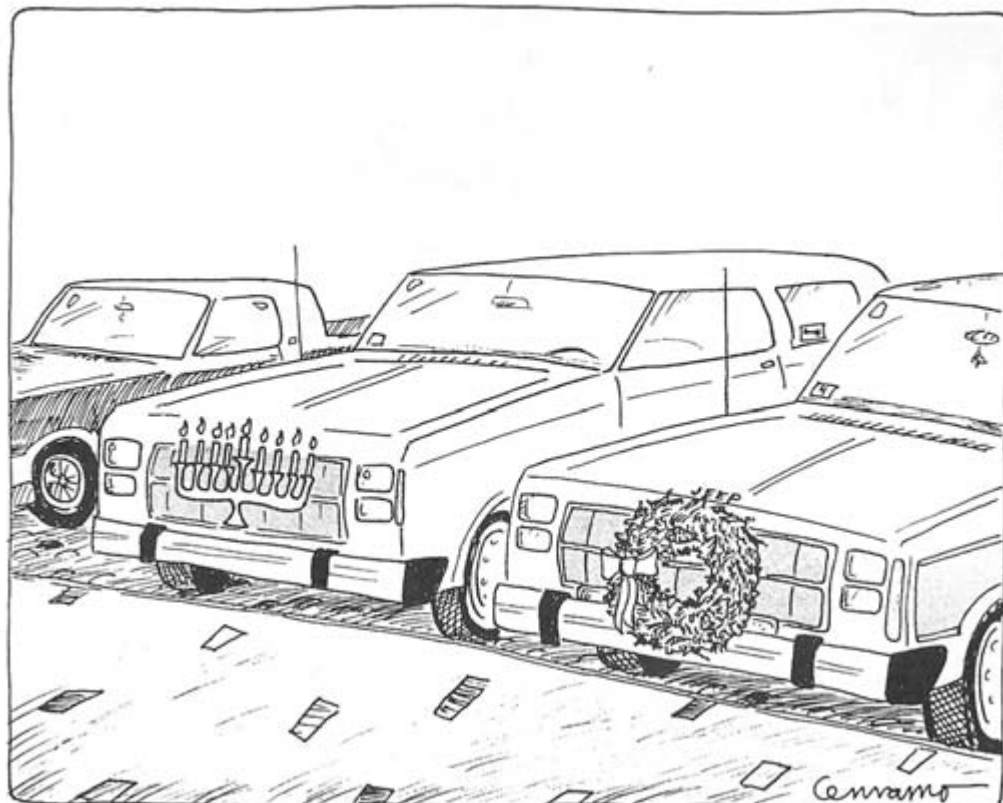
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