

Opinion

OSBORN

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mentation of the beach nourishment project.

5) Long-term impacts from the project will be minimal.

Mr. Roby is mistaken in his assessment that the project will result in major long-term impacts to the ecosystem. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers undertook a 7-year monitoring program to assess the impacts of a beach nourishment project completed in New Jersey that was 10 times larger than the one proposed for Sconset. Based on monitoring adult fish, benthic species, shorebirds, fish eggs and larvae, turbidity and suspended sediment, stomach content analyses, and surveys with recreational fishermen, the study concluded that there was no long-term impact to the marine environment. Nearshore recovery occurred within 2 to 6.5 months; offshore recovery occurred within 2 to 2.5 years.

Further, the marine environment along the Sconset coast is primarily defined by wave energy, tidal currents, and sand movement. All of the species that occur in the area do so because of these factors. Because the Sconset project will not change any of these factors, environmental impact will be short-term. As for the hard bottom that will be covered by sand, SBPF will establish new hard bottom close to the project area, a practice that has been successful in other states for mitigating impacts to buried limestone reefs.

6) Relocating structures is not a viable option for an entire community.

We disagree with Mr. Roby that the only option is "relocation of the threatened buildings." Agencies responsible for implementing national and state environmental policies, including the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office and the US Army Corps of Engineers, concurred that we had adequately evaluated potential alternatives. The alternatives we considered were: simply doing nothing, moving houses, structural options (such as sea walls, revetments, and groins), beach nourishment, and various upland and offshore sand sources. Our analysis demonstrated that beach nourishment was the preferred option and that moving an entire community was infeasible. While moving structures is viable for a very limited number of structures, it is simply not possible to move an entire community and have it remain a community. Ultimately, all of Baxter Road and Sconset Village would need to be moved. We feel it is far better to protect the existing community than to let one of Nantucket's historic highlights simply slip away.

7) Beach nourishment provides an environmentally responsible means of protecting our homes and Sconset Village.

We cannot understand Mr. Roby's comment that "we should not seek to avoid" losing our homes by implementing beach nourishment. We all seek to avoid losing our homes every time we weather-

proof them, repair them, or buy homeowner's insurance. Further, detailed scientific studies do not support Mr. Roby's claim of a "massive disruption" from the project. The previously-mentioned long-term studies conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers in New Jersey demonstrated that nearshore organisms recovered after beach nourishment in 2 to 6.5 months. Additionally, beach nourishment does not alter existing, natural sediment transport processes; rather, it simply adds more sand to the beach so that these natural processes can continue without threatening nearby structures. Overall, we feel that losing Baxter Road and Sconset Village would be far more disruptive to the island than carefully implementing a well-designed beach nourishment project.

8) We are proposing a pilot mitigation program to demonstrate the efficacy of our mitigation concept prior to the implementation of beach nourishment.

Mr. Roby questioned the impacts of dredging and the efficacy of replacing hard bottom habitat. Numerous studies have been completed by scientific and government agencies that have assessed the impacts of sand dredging and beach nourishment. Studies of borrow sites including a comprehensive study by the National Research Council concluded that sandy benthic habitats fully recover within one to three years after disturbance. Studies by the New Jersey Division of Fisheries and Wildlife have documented creation of fish habitat using boulder, concrete and other materials. Despite the abundance of independent data to support the fact that the environment will recover quickly and that hard bottom habitat can be successfully replicated, SBPF is proposing to implement a pilot mitigation program that will place boulders in the water in early spring 2008 and evaluate benthic colonization and fish habitat usage in the subsequent year before beach nourishment commences. This will provide site specific information on habitat recovery associated with the proposed hard bottom mitigation.

9) We risk far more by doing nothing than by implementing a proven shoreline protection method.

Beach nourishment is a proven method for stabilizing eroding shorelines, and the project at Sconset is far from being an experiment as Mr. Roby states. The coastal engineering consultants for SBPF have constructed over 60 beach nourishment projects. Throughout the design process, we have consistently sought to avoid or minimize impacts, and SBPF is willing to demonstrate we can mitigate the unavoidable impact to cobble habitat prior to implementing the project. We agree that the stakes are high, in that the do nothing approach Mr. Roby advocates ensures the destruction of the Sankaty Bluff.

Sincerely,

— John Osborn



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2. the name of a popular snow man .

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