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SUFFOLK CLOSEUP

Gone With The Sea

BY KARL GROSSMAN

Folly Beach. Yes, there really is such a place. It's a poster child for the folly of dumping sand on the shoreline in the expensive and fruitless attempt to try to hold back the ocean and protect beach houses.

Concerned Citizens of Quogue have included a current article about this beach in South Carolina in their current online newsletter (ccquogue.org) and the group asks the question: "Quogue's Own 'Folly' Beach?"

What's happening in Quogue is a conflict emblematic of the struggle involving the coast that's been going on for decades on Long Island, heightened by the impacts of Superstorm Sandy. There's a proposal for \$14 million in taxpayer-funded sand dumping along the Quogue shoreline.

Meanwhile, down south comes this news on the Concerned Citizens website.

"Folly Beach—Huge waves kicked up by Friday's storm scoured and swept away newly poured sands on the east end of this island," begins the article from The Post and Courier of South Carolina published last month. And it wasn't an encore of Sandy that did it, just another blow.

The cost to Folly Beach: some \$30 million in dumped sand—gone with the sea.

"In little more than a month," The Post and Courier says, Folly Beach homeowners "have lost much of the sand" dumped just a month earlier on the shore fronting their places.

Some \$30 million in sand placed on the Folly Beach shoreline. A month later, it's all gone.

The newspaper quoted the manager of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Folly Beach project as saying that placing sand on the shore "doesn't stop erosion. It protects properties. We put the required amount of sand out there. The sand didn't hold up."

And this was not the first time in recent years that loads of sand have been dumped on Folly Beach. It has been done again and again, at huge taxpayer cost. "The last time the work was done, in 2005, the cost was \$12 million," about "a third of the current cost," notes The Post and Courier.

This rise in price for coastal sand-dumping is "mirroring the soaring cost of beach nourishment across the country," comments Concerns Citizens of Quogue.

The organization in its current newsletter also brings attention to a letter from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation that summarizes comments it has received on the \$14 million plan to dump 1.1 million cubic yards of sand on the Quogue oceanfront. The comments are right on the mark and include:

- * "The relatively few homeowners affected by beach erosion in Quogue should consider relocating their homes landward."

- * "All village taxpayers should not have to pay for a project which will directly benefit a relative few."

- * "Since the longevity of largescale beach nourishment projects nationwide is variable at best and poor at worst, all concerned need to understand that the long-term efficacy of the proposed project is not guaranteed. Funds expended to carry out the project could be wasted, and there could be the expectation of the expenditure of additional funds to re-nourish the beach after the material from the first nourishment erodes."

- * "Oceanfront property owners must know that they are taking on considerable risk when they purchase or otherwise acquire their properties. These property owners, not the municipality, should be responsible for maintaining them."

And there is my favorite statement: "The current development pattern on the barrier island in Quogue is unwise and

unsustainable. The very large, very expensive, permanent homes which now exist on the oceanfront engender in the owners the understandable desire to protect them, at almost any cost, against the forces of nature, to the detriment of the beach and dunes. In the not-so-distant past, many people contented themselves with much smaller, less permanent, less valuable beach cottages, structures which they could afford to lose and/or replace if they were damaged by erosion or storms."

The DEC called on Quogue Village's "agent" on the sand-dumping project, First Coastal Corporation, to "review this letter" and comments "with the mayor and other village officials" and provide "responses to the issues raised."

The Quogue proposal is overshadowed by the plan of the Army Corps to dump sand from Fire Island to Montauk Point, first advanced nearly 60 years ago but failing to happen because of the folly it's always represented. Post-Sandy, however, beachfront homeowners and some politicians are pushing for it anew.

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