

# Highly Questionable

Coastal sustainability is a priority issue for Defend H2O. Viable beaches, marshlands and other natural features are critical to East End ecology, economy and coastal lifestyle.

While the North Sea Beach Colony's plan to replenish the vanished beach ["Neighbors Have Plan For Vanishing Beach," April 13] is not without some merit, it ignores two critical factors on beach stability: namely, sea level rise, and extensive shoreline hardening (bulkheads and stone revetments) that exists in the area.

Shoreline dynamics is controlled by four primary influences. The supply of sand, shape of the beach, wave energy and sea level rise all affect stability. As project proponents have correctly identified, the inlet at North Sea Harbor is disrupting the natural flow of sand. And because a more expedient inlet management policy has prevailed, dredged sand is routinely stockpiled on town property on the east and removed from the littoral transport system. As a result, the downdrift beach (which comprises the area of the North Sea Beach Colony) is sand starved.

While I support inlet bypassing, the concept of assigning the costs of perpetual beach restoration to the North Sea Beach Colony through the creation of an erosion control district is highly questionable. It is almost exclusively a summer community, with the majority of the obligate taxpayers unaware of the level of wave/surge energy that winter nor'easters unleash on bay beaches.

The fact that this beach is entirely bulkheaded will all but guarantee its quick disappearance during storm events. Compounded by a rapidly rising sea, ongoing beach nourishment in this area is a costly folly that should give Southampton Town officials reason for pause.

Going forward, inlet (sand) bypassing is a critical management action that must be implemented to the fullest extent possible. And although the mindset may not be at a place of acceptance for some, in some locations moving back is the only way we'll be able to keep our beaches being beaches.

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