



TOWN OF SURFSIDE

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Dear Residents,

Starting in mid-November residents and visitors of our beautiful coastal community have most probably noticed heavy machinery and trucks on the beach. I would like to update you on the efforts of the Town Commission and Town Administration to ensure a safe, healthy, and clean beach for you, your family, friends and visitors. Full reports, studies, past meetings, and further detailed information are available on the Town's website at www.townofsurfsidefl.gov at the "Beach Sand Replacement Project" link.

The beach is a dynamic ecosystem. The quantity of sand naturally ebbs and flows with waves and storms. Projects known as beach nourishment sponsored by the Federal Government bring additional sand on our beaches to protect against erosion - providing a protective barrier for our community and coastal ecosystem.

Balancing nature and growth in beachfront communities is both a goal and a challenge. The State of Florida, under the supervision of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), requires that sand excavated from beachfront development projects remains on site or is placed within the same beach system, in other words, within a nearby location. The FDEP oversees this process through a closely regulated permitting process.

The State of Florida required that sand excavated from the Surf Club site, a coastal development project, be placed on the beach in Surfside, which was completed in April, 2014.

Upon completion, there were concerns from a few residents over differences of color, potential chemicals or other toxins, and construction debris in the excavated sand.

The Town immediately took action to address the concerns raised by residents of the Town. The Town Commission directed chemical and physical testing of the excavated sand. The Town retained the services of experts, including expert independent toxicologists to provide analysis and testing of the excavated sand. There was specific concern from the group of residents over lead, arsenic, asbestos, and radon gas. The results of the testing showed chemical background levels and physical qualities of sand consistent with those throughout Miami-Dade County. In addition, the Town consulted with Miami-Dade County and State health departments and environmental agencies, who provided reports, data, and analysis showing that the chemical and physical qualities of the excavated sand were consistent with the quality of sand in Miami-Dade and Florida, and did not pose elevated health risks to beach-goers.

Throughout this process, the Town made public engagement a priority. The Town Commission created and appointed a Sand Project Community Monitoring Committee to review data, listen to experts, and be a sounding board for ideas, questions and concerns.

Following the Sand Project Community Monitoring Committee's recommendations, the Town passed a resolution urging the State of Florida to conduct chemical and physical sand testing for excavated sand placed on the beach as a general policy throughout Florida. In addition, the Town adopted an ordinance, the first of its kind in Florida, which requires excavated sand placed on the beach from coastal construction projects in Surfside to pass rigorous chemical testing and to meet specific physical characteristics. While the State has the ultimate authority in the coastal construction permitting process, the law allows the Town to adopt more stringent requirements for public health safety and welfare within our boundaries.

Concerns from a few residents remained over construction debris in the excavated sand. While this issue was in the hands of the FDEP, the Town continued to advocate for a clean and safe beach.

On April 14, 2015, a unanimous vote by the Town Commission directed the Surf Club to remove and replace the excavated sand, subject to FDEP's approval. Specifically, the Town Commission directed that the excavated sand be replaced by a special type of light powdery sand, known to come from the Ortona Mine in Central Florida, or of similar quality. The FDEP incorporated the Town Commission's recommendation into a legally binding document known as a "Consent Order".

The Consent Order was finalized and signed by the Surf Club and FDEP on October 15, 2015. The process to remove and replace sand could not occur until the end of marine turtle nesting season on November 1. The removal and replacement process started on November 12, 2015 and is programmed to be completed by the end of 2015.

The Town Administration has been in close contact with all parties to limit the impact that this project has on residents and visitors, while doing everything possible to expedite this process. The Surfside Police Department has provided security, public safety, and traffic control in the area, of paramount importance in a construction project of this magnitude. We have observed and taken daily pictures, which are posted on our website. Once the process is finished, the FDEP will complete a final site inspection report, surveying the area to ensure compliance.

I want to personally thank you for your patience throughout this time. Surfside's beach is clean, safe, and beautiful - here for you, your family, friends, and visitors to enjoy!

Sincerely,



Guillermo Olmedillo
Surfside Town Manager