

County allocates \$81,000 to fight erosion

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Galveston County commissioners voted this week to invest about \$81,000 in efforts to fight beach erosion.

More than \$32,000 of that will go toward a project to restore sand to the beaches near Rollover Pass on the Bolivar Peninsula.

This is sand the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers routinely dredges from the Intracoastal Waterway.

“Our share goes toward the cost of putting the sand on the beach,” said John Lee, the county’s point person on erosion projects.

According to an agreement signed by county commissioners, the total cost of the project on the peninsula will be nearly \$400,000. The corps will pick up most of that, about \$266,000. The General Land Office, which oversees coastal projects in Texas, will pay about \$98,000.

“This is an annual project,” Lee said. “It typically happens in late January or early February.”

Another \$29,000 will go toward the hiring of Marlowe and Co., a Washington lobbyist.

“It’s easy to get lost in the shuffle,” Lee said. “By having a lobbyist, we have someone who’s in the hall every day knocking on doors, someone who’s on a first-name basis with the subcommittee people.”

The county’s share of the retainer represents half of the total bill. Most of the rest, just over \$23,000, is picked up by the city of Galveston, while the Galveston park board chips in \$4,350 and the village of Jamaica Beach kicks in \$1,450.

Lee credited Marlowe and Co. with landing more than \$1.6 million in funding for Galveston County during the last four years. Just recently, he said, the firm managed to insert language in a bill designating Galveston County as one of three sediment-management centers in the country.

“We’re not sure what will happen with that at this point,” Lee said. “This is just one of the steps that you have to have before you can begin to get funding.”

At the same time, the county has teamed up with the same three entities to hire Shiner Moseley and Associates as a consultant on erosion projects. The county also pays half of that contract, which totals \$40,000 a year. Galveston’s share is \$16,000, while the park board picks up \$3,000 and Jamaica Beach tosses in \$1,000.

The Corpus Christi-based engineering firm works with the county in designing projects that might be eligible for funding.

“We got four of the 14 projects that were funded the last time around,” Lee said.

Lee, who works in the county emergency management office, represents county government on the local beach erosion task force. He is a member of the board of the American Shore and Beach Association and vice president of that group’s Texas chapter.

“Galveston County is an eroding area, and if we can be involved in organizations that promote a response to that erosion, it’s in our interest,” he said.

When it comes to such efforts, Galveston County is still a newcomer.

“We really got involved in 1999, the year after Tropical Storm Frances did so much damage to our coastline,” Lee said.

Most coastal states have been involved in such efforts for decades.

“Texas has been very slow to get funding,” he said. “Places like North Carolina and Florida have had projects since the early ’60s.”

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