

EDISTO BEACH: A Beach Access Management Plan



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Prepared for

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EDISTO BEACH: A Beach Access Management Plan

Introduction

The Town of Edisto Beach is proposing to develop and adopt a Beach Access Management Plan that will provide strategies and priorities for improving public access. It is Town Council's desire to involve the community in the Plan's development process. Initial objectives will:

- Establish a goal to preserve the Town's beach access points as a means of providing safe and attractive public access to the Atlantic Ocean.
- Inventory the current status of thirty-eight (38) public beach accesses owned by the Town of Edisto Beach.
- Provide dune protection;
- Prevent loss of habitat and address beach access problems caused oceanfront erosion.
- Evaluate each beach access point to determine its development potential (i.e., pedestrian access including foot traffic only, walkover development, handicap access and/or on and off street parking, restroom facilities, litter containment and criteria for signage.)
- Provide development designs sensitive to the natural environment and the community's objectives.
- Prioritize access improvements based on observed needs.

Methodology

As stated earlier, the Town of Edisto Beach seeks to develop and adopt a Beach Access Management Plan that will provide strategies and priorities for improving public access. Further, Edisto Beach Town Council wants to incorporate public input into the planning process for the management plan. The process for developing a local beach access management plan is outlined in the schedule shown below. The ten elements that are required by the State Beachfront Management Act, as related to beach access, should be addressed in creating the plan to ensure compliance with existing state law.

Comprehensive, Long-Range Planning

To develop a beach access management plan for the Town of Edisto Beach, a process for developing comprehensive, long-range plans was followed and included the items below:

1. an overall vision statement, goals and objectives, and strategies for developing and managing beach access facilities and programs;
2. an inventory and analysis of existing beach access plans (state, county, and local);
3. an inventory and analysis of existing beach access facilities and programs;
4. public input obtained through open forums and survey research;
5. input from appropriate public officials at the federal, state, county and municipal levels of government;
6. specific recommendations based on the information and data generated above, including details regarding facilities, programming, staffing, potential sites for development (with renderings indicating a general design and layout of proposed sites and amenities);
7. a strategy to mobilize resources (human, funding, etc.) to carry out the recommendations;
8. a schedule for implementing the proposed programs and developing the sites and facilities recommended;
9. a maintenance program for existing facilities and amenities; and,
10. a methodology to evaluate the effectiveness of plan implementation.

The Plan Making Process

After notification by Town of Edisto Beach officials to create the beach access management plan, the contractor initiated a preliminary inventory and assessment of existing public beach access sites and facilities in the community. In conducting this inventory and assessment, the consultant interviewed appropriate municipal, county, state and federal officials regarding the availability of beach access facilities, programs and activities in the Town and the present beach access needs of residents and visitors of the Town.

Following this initial information gathering stage, the consultant developed strategies to communicate the efforts of the Town to create a beach access management plan (including releasing approved public notices to local media for publication and broadcast). Residents and visitors of the Town were made aware of the project to gain their support and participation in providing input about the community's beach access needs. Next, the consultant distributed a survey questionnaire with a cover letter to all residents and property owners (as identified by officials of the Town of Edisto Beach).

The consultant initiated a public forum shortly after the survey questionnaire was disseminated. The forum was held at an appropriate date, after consultation with Town officials.

Finally, the preparation of the draft document began after all the data generated from the interviews, forums, surveys and observations were analyzed. General concept drawings (renderings) were prepared.

Edisto Beach: History

Some sources state that Edisto was settled before Charleston, but no records prove or disprove this statement. Records do show that Edisto Island was purchased from the Edisto tribe of Indians by the Earl of Shaftsbury – one of the original Lord Proprietors – for some cloth, hatchets, beads and other goods in 1674. Rice and indigo were among the first crops planted; however, its sea island cotton crop eventually became world famous. It was claimed that the Pope in Rome insisted that his garments be made of Edisto Island cotton. The cotton industry brought great prosperity to the Island, and many of the plantation owners built magnificent homes; some of these plantation home sites are still present.

Following the Civil War and the advent of the boll weevil, the cotton industry died and the Islanders started truck farming, shrimping and fishing. Today, tourism is also one of the largest industries on Edisto Island.

Resort development began on Edisto Beach in the 1920s. Beachgoers had to time their visits to coincide with low tide in order to cross the marsh areas by driving on beds of oyster shells. Then, they crossed the dunes to the beach and drove along the ocean to their cottages that had no electricity or running water.

Development occurred gradually in the early years. Later, a major hurricane in 1940 destroyed many of the existing homes. The hurricane destroyed 175 cottages on Edisto Beach and cut dunes back 30 to 120 feet. Following World War II, development on Edisto Beach began to increase (Neal, Blakeney, Pilkey and Pilkey 1984).

Edisto Beach: A Sense of Place

Promotional literature for the low country coast of South Carolina claims that the region has been “discovered” by folks far and wide. People flock to places there because the region enjoys one of the most pleasant styles of southern living. The fear is that such affection, if left unchecked, could lead to the demise of the very casual-paced lifestyle so attractive to its residents and visitors. Accommodating the interests of developers and tourists could ultimately cause significant change to the communities there.

Yet, a few special coastal destinations remain – “enclaves somehow sheltered and set aside from the rush to commercialize.” Some places have managed to maintain this way of life and keep in tact the beloved low country character. Apparently, these places have support from numerous individuals who want to keep the cherished character of the region from diminishing further.

One of the special places of the low country with unmatched casual living is Edisto Island. The land, the beaches, the water and the people continue to preserve the essence of low country living and the great beauty of the Carolina coast. This haven lies at the end of the road (literally, the end of Highway 174) and is a place devoid of traffic lights, with a top speed limit of 35 miles per hour.

Edisto Beach: Site Description

The Beachfront Management Plan for the Town of Edisto Beach was prepared by Planning Services Group, Inc., of Columbia, SC and submitted for approval on June 13, 1991. According to that plan, the Town of Edisto Beach is located on a barrier island in southeastern South Carolina, approximately 45 miles southwest of the City of Charleston in Colleton County. (The Town left Charleston County in 1975 to become a part of Colleton County.) Edisto Beach is bounded by Charleston County to the north, St. Helena Sound to the southwest, and the Atlantic Ocean to the east.

In *Living with the South Carolina Shore*, the authors describe Edisto Beach as “the outer, barrier-island portion of the larger Edisto Island complex. This barrier, along with the Edingsville Beach and Botany Plantation, is separated from the main body of Edisto Island by tidal creeks and salt marshes” (Neal, Blakeney, Pilkey and Pilkey 1984). Edisto Beach is separated from the main body of Edisto Island by Big Bay Creek, Scott Creek, Jeremy Creek, and associated salt marsh (Beachfront Management Plan 1991). The northeastern end of Edisto Beach is “more like its narrow, overwashed, and sister eroding islands,” while the southern stretch is much wider with “forested beach ridges of moderate elevation” (Neal, Blakeney, Pilkey and Pilkey 1984).

Edisto Beach has a sandy beachfront that is 4.0 miles long (6.4 km), and altogether a total length of 4.4 miles (7.1 km), with a maximum width -- including both high ground and marsh -- of 1.5 miles (2.4 km). The high ground (upland) totaled 920 acres, with 464 acres of salt marsh and 35 acres of the sandy beachfront. The Island covers approximately 2.16 square miles, and elevations on the island range from sea level to 20 feet (about 9.1 m) (Beachfront Management Plan 1991).

Edisto Beach State Park occupies approximately one-third of Edisto Beach at the northern end. The west end of the island has been developed as a resort. The rest of the island is privately-owned by small landowners. Of note, the Town’s beachfront management plan stated that “Edisto Beach provides 63 percent of the sandy beachfront in Colleton County” (Beachfront Management Plan 1991).

Groins along Edisto Island

- Thirty-two (32) groins from the State Park south to Mikell Street.
- Two (2) groins at Louise and Bailey Streets, along the South Edisto River.

Edisto Beach: Population and Housing

In 1990, the population of the Town of Edisto Beach totaled 340 permanent residents (Beachfront Management Plan 1991). According to 2000 Census data, the population has increased nearly 90% to 641 permanent residents. Colleton County as a whole increased only 10% from 34,377 to 38,264. Further, 329 households were identified in 2000, with 221 listed as family households and 108 listed as non-family households. The average household size was 1.95 persons and the average family size was 2.34 persons. Only 38 households had individuals under 18 years of age, and 121 households had individuals 65 years and older. The median age of permanent residents in the Town was 55.7 years, while all of Colleton County had a median age of 36.5 years.

With a total of 1786 housing units located in the Town of Edisto Beach, vacant units for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use comprised nearly 82% (1,456) of all housing units, and the count for occupied housing units totaled 330. Apparently, most of the householders of the occupied housing units have been residing in their homes only since 1990, with 62 (18.8%) householders moving into the unit between 1999-2000, 128 (38.8%) between 1995-1998, and 55 (16.7%) between 1990-1994 – a total of 245 (74.3%) of the occupied housing units in the town. Interestingly, over 21% (382) of the housing structures were built since 1990, 32.5% (580) were built between 1980-1989, and 32.6% (582) between 1970-1979. (See 2000 Census Data.)

Survey of Residents and Property Owners

A survey was developed and administered to all residents and property owners. A mailing list of all residents and/or property owners was developed from the Town's database of water customers. A total of 1786 surveys were mailed and 505 (28.3%) were completed and returned. Demographically, the respondent pool closely mirrored the 2000 Census data for the Town. The average age was 59.45 years for the 404 respondents (80%) who provided an answer to Question 21 concerning age. In fact, 344 (68%) of the returned surveys indicated that the respondent was at least 50 years of age or older.

The average number of persons per household was 2.85 for the 492 surveys (97.5%) responding to Question 3. Additionally, 415 surveys provided a response to Question 22 regarding the gender of the respondent, with 260 males (62.6%) responding and 155 females (37.4%). Finally, 176 of the respondents lived within the town limits of Edisto Beach, with 140 of these residents owning property in the Town. Altogether, 321 respondents owned property in the Town, with 7 who lived in Colleton County but not inside the Town limits, 9 others who lived in Charleston County, and 81 who did not live in either Colleton or Charleston counties.

The remaining survey questions can be divided into three categories: 1) questions regarding the participation in beachfront recreational activities by Edisto residents/property owners; 2) questions about their perceptions and the use of beachfront access points; and, 3) questions regarding the need for improvements to existing access points or the development of new access points. In the questions regarding beachfront recreational activities, respondents seemed pleased with the recreational opportunities available in

Edisto Beach. In response to Question 1, 335 (66%) indicated that they were “always” able to **participate** in their favorite recreational and leisure beachfront activities in the Town, while 136 (27%) responded that they were “sometimes” able to participate. For Question 2, only 97 (19%) described the **variety** of recreational opportunities in Edisto Beach as “abundant,” while 326 (66%) responded that the variety is “sufficient” and 54 (11%) responded that it is “poor.” From a list of beachfront recreational activities in Question 5, respondents were asked to identify the activities that they participate in regularly in the Town. The activities identified more often included: walking/jogging (453), collecting sea shells (408), reading (394), sunbathing (373) swimming (356), socializing (331), and fishing (319). No other activity in the list was identified more than 127 times. Lastly, in Question 6 respondents were asked to identify the four activities that are more important than the other activities in the list. Walking/jogging was identified as the most important activity (152 respondents), with fishing (64 respondents), swimming (63 respondents) and collecting sea shells (32 respondents) far behind.

Public Assessment of Beach Access

Respondents described the **quality** of beach access points as: *excellent* (155 or 30.7%), *good* (248 or 49.1%), *fair* (77 or 15.2%) or *poor* (16 or 3.2%). Further, respondents opined that **enough** (quantity) beach access points are available in the Town, with 405 (80.2%) indicating “Yes” to Question 8, 65 (12.9%) indicating “No,” and 30 (5.9%) offering no opinion. Lastly, the respondents’ perception of the **condition** of beach access points was requested in Question 11. Respondents described the condition of beach access points as: *excellent*, 94 (18.6%); *good*, 183 (36.2%); *fair*, 136 (26.9%); *poor*, 38 (7.5%); and no opinion or *don’t know*, 54 (10.7%).

Next, three questions addressed the **use** of beach access points by residents and property owners of the Town. In Question 9 respondents were asked, “Have you or others in your household used any beach access points in the Town during the past 12 months?” A significant majority, 435 (86.1%) indicated “Yes,” and 61 (12.1%) responded “No.” Only nine (1.8%) did not provide a response. The second question regarding the respondents’ use of beach access points, Question 10, asked, “Which two beach access points in the Town do you use more often than other beach access points?” Respondents wrote the street names of access points used more often than others, with 402 (79.6%) identifying at least one access point used more often than others, and 226 of that total (44.8%) identifying two points. The access point at **Lybrand Street** was cited most often (51), followed by The Point (32), Jenkins (30), Mikell (24), Edings (21), Atlantic (20), Portia (20), “Fairfield’s Cabana” (16), Cupid (16), Thistle (14), Whaley (14), Yacht Club (14), Dawhoo (12), Ebb Tide (12), Osceola (12), Seabrook (12), Townsend (12), Byrd (11), Holmes (11), Marianne (11), Bailey (10), Chancellor (10), Dorothy (10), LaRoche (10), Mitchell (10), and Nancy (10). (*See the Appendix for the complete list.*) Finally, the respondents were asked to indicate the reasons for not using beach access points in the Town with greater frequency, and a significant number, 226 (44.8%), responded that they did not need to increase their use. Other reasons for not using beach access points in the Town with greater frequency included: not enough parking, 97 (19.2%); restrooms are not available, 68 (13.5%); groins are difficult to cross 64 (12.7%); beach accesses are not close to my home, 42 (8.3%); not enough golf cart

parking, 33 (6.5%); facilities are not maintained properly, 28 (5.5%); handicap accesses are not available, 19 (3.8%); parking hours are inconvenient, 13 (2.6%); and use facilities provided by other agencies, 10 (2.0%).

Public Support for Beach Access Improvements

The remaining questions (14-17) asked the respondents to indicate their support for **improvements** to existing access points or the **development** of new access points. Question 13 asked, "When compared to other priorities for the Town, how important is it for the Town to fund improvements to beachfront access points during the next 5 years?" Overall, respondents indicated that such improvements did not have a high priority amongst all funding needs of the Town, with only 71 (14.1%) indicating that funding improvements to beachfront access points is *very important*. Surprisingly, 182 (36%) indicated that funding improvements to beachfront access points is just *somewhat important*, 219 (43.4%) indicated is *not important* at all, and 19 (3.8%) indicated that they didn't know enough to respond. (Fourteen were blank with no response indicated.)

Existing Features/Potential Improvements

Question 14 provided a list of 20 potential improvements that could be made to existing beachfront access points in the Town and requested the respondent indicate the importance of each activity. Only three potential improvements were identified as *very important* by more than 25 percent of the respondents, including: 1) protection of the dunes and sea oats with 389 (77%), 2) improving litter control, 263 (52.1%), and 3) defining access points to prevent encroachment, 252 (49.9%). After a significant drop, adding transition paths over the groins was the next improvement to receive significant support as a very important activity from 122 respondents (24.2%); this was followed by improving turtle lighting from 109 respondents (21.6%) and repairing existing access points (walkways, ramps, etc.) from 107 respondents (21.2%).

Contrastingly, several of the potential improvements to the beach access points were identified by a majority of the respondents as *not important*, including: 1) installing beach access showers by 309 respondents (61.2%); 2) adding beach access amenities by 301 respondents (59.6%); 3) enlarging existing beach access points, 296 (58.6%); and 4) installing drinkable water at access points, 266 (52.7%). Several more potential improvements were identified as not important by at least 40% of the respondents, including: 1) adding town playground and picnic areas, 250 (49.5%); 2) adding recreational areas (for volleyball, walking/jogging), 241 (47.7%); 3) improving existing swimming areas, 241 (47.7%); 4) building beach access restrooms, 239 (47.3%); (5) improving signage, 236 (46.7%); 6) defining areas for cultural activities and/or special events, 225 (44.6%); 7) improving and adding beach access parking, 218 (43.2%); and, 8) increasing the visibility of law enforcement, 200 (39.6%).

In Question 15, respondents were asked: "Are you willing for your tax dollars to be spent on the improvements to beach access points and amenities that you identified as important ..." from the list in the previous question. While a majority (280 or 54.4%) indicated "Yes," it must be remembered that this is primarily in support of the three improvement activities identified as very important by the respondents: protection of the dunes and sea oats, improving litter control, and defining access points to prevent

encroachments. Even the improvements that were identified as “*somewhat important*” by more than 30% of the respondents totaled only three, including: 1) adding more handicap access by 205 respondents (40.6%); 2) repairing existing access points (walkways, ramps, etc.) by 193 (38.2%); 3) improving litter control, 156 (30.9%); 4) increasing visibility of law enforcement by 148 (29.3%); 5) improving signage by 147 (29.1%); 6) defining areas for cultural activities and/or special events, 143 (28.3%); and 7) defining access points to prevent encroachments, 141 (27.9%).

New Features/Access Expansion

Question 16 provided a list of eight potential features that could be built in creating *new access points* in the Town. Respondents were asked to indicate the importance of each new feature. All of the features were deemed *not important* by more respondents than those who indicated either *very important* or *somewhat important* combined, except one feature – environmental education sites. Building new access points and facilities did not have significant support from the respondents as indicated by their opinion that the following features are *not important*: 1) multiple purpose trails between access points (for biking/skating/jogging/walking) was not important to 266 respondents (52.7%); 2) community park with passive facilities (such as picnic areas, shelters) was not important to 248 respondents (49.1%); 3) acquisition of land (purchase or donation) to build new beach access points or amenities by 307 respondents (60.8%); 4) beach access points with restrooms by 268 respondents (53.1%); 5) beach access points with showers by 329 respondents (65.1%); and, 6) beach access points with drinking water by 300 respondents (59.4%). A moderate amount of support for developing environmental education sites (with nature programs) is present since only 213 (42.2%) respondents indicated it was not important, but 197 (39%) thought the feature was somewhat important, and to 58 (11.5%), very important.

Yet, the support for building and maintaining potential environmental education sites was not apparent among the 236 respondents (46.7%) who indicated in Question 17 that they were not willing for their tax dollars to be spent on building new access points and/or facilities. While 186 respondents (36.8%) did indicate their willingness for tax dollars to be spent on new facilities, 57 others (11.3%) indicated they were not sure.

Survey of Recreational Users

A survey was developed and administered to a sample of individuals recreating along the beachfront in the Town of Edisto Beach. Members of the Town’s beach patrol staff distributed the survey to 199 people over a two-week period in July (9th – 23rd). Generally, the respondents completed the survey and returned it to the staff person while she waited; some respondents brought the survey to Town Hall. Demographically, the respondents of this survey were quite different from the respondents to the survey of residents and property owners. For instance, the average age of these respondents was 42.9 years old for the 158 respondents (79.4%) who provided an answer to Question 12 which requested age. In fact, 148 (74.4%) of the returned surveys indicated that the respondent was 49 years old or younger.

The average number of persons per household was 4.02 for the 190 surveys (95.5%) responding to Question 3. Additionally, 160 surveys provided a response to Question 13 regarding the gender of the respondent, with 99 females (61.9%) responding and 61 males (38.1%). Finally, only 20 of the respondents (10.05%) claimed to be residents of Edisto Beach (Question 10), and 21 respondents (10.55%) indicated they owned property in the Town (Question 11). Surprisingly, 156 respondents (78.4%) indicated that they were not residents of Charleston or Colleton Counties.

The remaining questions of the survey can be divided into two categories: 1) questions regarding the participation of users in various beachfront recreational activities; and, 2) questions about their perceptions and their use of beachfront access points. The responses of these individuals closely mirror the responses of residents and property owners surveyed separately. In the questions regarding beachfront recreational activities, respondents seemed pleased with the recreational opportunities available in Edisto Beach. In response to Question 1, 147 (73.9%) indicated they were “always” able to **participate** in their favorite recreational and leisure beachfront activities in the Town, while 47 (23.6%) responded that they were “sometimes” able to participate. For Question 2, only 39 (19.6%) described the **variety** of recreational opportunities in Edisto Beach as “abundant,” while 132 (66.3%) responded that the variety is “sufficient” and 20 (10.1%) responded that it is “poor.” From a list of beachfront recreational activities in Question 5, respondents were asked to identify the activities that they participate in regularly at Edisto Beach. The activities identified more often included: sunbathing (190), swimming (174), walking/jogging (172), collecting sea shells/fossils (169), reading (161), socializing (125), and fishing (88). No other activity in the list was identified more than 41 times.

Respondents described the **quality** of beach access points as: *excellent* (103 or 51.8%), *good* (75 or 37.7%), *fair* (11 or 5.5%) or *poor* (1 or .5%). Further, respondents opined that **enough** (quantity) beach access points are available in the Town, with 165 (82.9%) indicating “Yes” to Question 6, 9 (4.5%) indicating “No,” and 23 (11.6%) indicating “Don’t Know.”

Two questions addressed the **use** of beach access points. Question 8 asked, “Which two beach access points in the Town do you use more often than other beach access points?” Respondents indicated the street names of access points used more often than others, with 149 (74.9%) identifying at least one access point used more often than others, and 58 of that total (29.1%) identifying two points. The access point at **Lybrand Street** was cited most often with 15 responses, followed by Cabana (10), Murray (9), Point (8), Jenkins (8), Edings (8), Cupid (8), Seabrook (7), Atlantic (7), Cheehaw (6), Osceola (5), and Byrd (5). Altogether, 33 street-ends were identified by the respondents.

Finally, in Question 8 the respondents were asked to indicate the reasons for not using beach access points in the Town with greater frequency. A significant number, 66 (33.1%), responded that they did not need to increase their use. Other reasons for not using beach access points in the Town with greater frequency included: not enough parking, 29 (14.6%); beach accesses are not close to my home, 29 (14.6%) restrooms are not available, 28 (14.1%); do not know what is available (6.0%); groins are difficult to

cross 11 (5.5%); and parking hours are inconvenient, 13 (4.5%). Thirty respondents identified “other reasons” for not using the beach access points more often, with “renting beachfront home” or “own beachfront home” the specified reason.

In review of the data from the recreational users survey, one important piece of data is obviously missing – the average number of day visitors during various periods of the year. Rightfully, a beach access management plan should consider the expectations and needs of this user group. Edisto Beach should not ignore this significant user group, and an accurate head count and an assessment of the impact of day-visitors impact on the town’s resources is needed to develop a comprehensive beach access management plan.

Public Meeting

Public forums were planned for August 4th and August 25th in the Town of Edisto Beach. Information about the forums was distributed through the introductory letters accompanying the surveys distributed to residents/property owners and beach users (see sample surveys). No other advertisement of the forums was deemed necessary. Though all resident/property owner surveys were mailed by the printing company a month in advance of the forums, surveys to residents and property owners with an Edisto Beach zip code (29438) were not distributed until the August 4th date had passed. Completed surveys from addresses outside the Town of Edisto Beach were returned beginning mid-July until late August, while completed surveys from Town residents were not received until the second week of August. (In fact, the Town of Edisto Beach graciously performed a second mailing to town residents after it was determined that no addressee in the town had received a copy of the survey.)

The public forum scheduled for August 4th found no attendees present, since no one in the town had received a copy of the survey by that date. With the second mailing of the survey to residents by Town officials and the eventual distribution of the first mailing, the August 25th forum had a turnout of 29 attendees.

First, a presentation on beach access issues facing the town was made, followed by a preliminary review of completed surveys (approximately 427 returned by the date). Next, attendees were allowed to respond to the information provided and thereby allow public input in developing a plan for beach access enhancement. Comments from the attendees were largely positive regarding the status of beach access in the Town. These comments were divided into two areas: physical activities and policy issues. The policy issues identified by the attendees included: encroachments, signage for dune crossings, posting of regulations on beach use, and no tax increase to fund beach access activities. The physical issues identified by the attendees included: encroachments, wooden walkways, signage on beach use at each accessway, and improvements to some access points (i.e., Byrd Street). For the most part, a significant majority of the attendees seemed critical of ideas to expand beach access or to construct beachfront amenities (restrooms, showers, etc.) to accommodate day visitors, with only a handful voicing support for such activities.

Conclusions and Priorities

The Town of Edisto Beach has initiated steps to address beach access management, including the formation of its Tides Committee and the adoption of a beach access management program. Further, during the past decade several grants (coupled with local matching funds) have been obtained to enhance beach access with walkways, ramps, parking improvements, and handicap accessibility. Based on the analysis of the survey questionnaires – as administered to residents/ property owners by mail and to beachfront users by interviewers – beach access in the Town of Edisto Beach is viewed favorably by various user groups. The primary user groups of residents and property owners seem to support efforts to protect existing access points – particularly the dunes and beachfront from degradation – and parking areas from encroachment. Activities to accomplish these goals would receive the support of various user groups. However, efforts to expand existing access or develop new access points would not be viewed favorably by the majority of residents, property owners.

The argument to *not* build beach access amenities such as restrooms, showers, beachfront parks is logical, if one believes that offering these features leads to degradation of the resource through overuse and the inability of the local government to support development and maintenance activities. The argument is purely a carrying capacity issue for residents and local officials. The resource is finite, and the financial, managerial, and social capacities of local officials and residents are limited. More importantly, if such enhancements were built, the opportunities and experiences currently offered by Edisto Beach to residents and visitors would change as numbers increase and the ability – and willingness – to accommodate decrease. Edisto Beach, as a residential beachfront community, has established a market niche that suits its residents and overnight visitors well. Change should occur gradually, rather than at a pace that alienates its core user groups. However, Edisto Beach should obtain an accurate count of day-visitors and assess the impact of day-visitors on the town's resources. There are other beach destinations along the coast of South Carolina to accommodate mass visitation, and this coastal community should not be coerced into following that model – at least, not at this time.

Perhaps, more appropriate beach management issues for the Town to address are indicated in the beach access assessment chart shown on page 14 of this report (and included in the site-by-site assessment also). In particular, the assessment found that: 1) encroachment by private property owners into the access pathway/parking area is problematic, especially in the Point Street area; 2) access points large enough to accommodate parking do not have marked spaces; 3) several access points having a marked parking area need resurfacing (gravel or paving) or other improvements; 4) ramps and/or walkways are possible improvements for several access points; 5) signs are needed to inform users of prohibited activities and designate parking availability, particularly handicapped accessibility; and 6) severe erosion along the oceanfront creates hazards for users and diminishes the recreational beachfront area. The chart also indicates the priority for initiating the activities: a high priority for walkways is found at access points on Matilda Street, Billow Street, Townsend Street, and 3600 Yacht Club; a high priority for ramp construction or repair at Osceola Street, Mikell Street, Townsend Street, Ebb

Tide Street, and both Yacht Club Road accesses; marking parking spaces within the access point at Jenkins Street and White Cap Street; addressing encroachments by private property owners at Dawhoo Street and each of the Point Street accesses; dune building at all access points with severe erosion problems; and replacing all worn signs listing prohibited activities. (See the Beach Access Assessment Chart.) Before initiating any of the activities identified, DHEC's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources Management should be consulted to obtain the appropriate permits and identify potential financial assistance. Included in the appendices of this report are DHEC-OCRM Critical Area Permitting Regulations (as related to the beach/dune system) and potential sources for financial assistance.

Town of Edisto Beach Access Assessment Chart

| Location (street address) Tenth of mile from previous access | | Pedestrian Only | Walkway | Ramp | Parking Area (spaces) | Private Encroachment | Erosion | Prohibited Activities Signage |
|---|-------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 106 | Palmetto (Coral-Pavilion) | | | | Unmarked | Possibly | Groin | Worn |
| 126 | Palmetto (Fenwick) .2 | Yes | Possible | Possible | | | Slight | No |
| 200 | Palmetto (Mary) .2 | Yes | Extend/ Wooden | | | | Slight | No |
| 300 | Palmetto (Whaley) .2 | Yes | Possible | Long-term | | | Moderate | No |
| 400 | Palmetto (Matilda) .2 | Yes | Extend/ Concrete | | | | Moderate | No |
| 500 | Palmetto (Cupid) .2 | Yes | Possible | | | | Moderate | No |
| 600 | Palmetto (Atlantic) .2 | Yes | Possible | Possible | | | Moderate | No |
| 700 | Palmetto (Portia) .2 | Yes | Possible | | | Shrubbery | Groin | No |
| 800 | Palmetto (Dawhoo) .2 | Appearance | Possible | Possible | Unmarked | Left and Right | Severe | Worn |
| 900 | Palmetto (Cheehaw) .1 | | | Long-term | Unpaved (8) | | Groin/ Severe | No |
| 1000 | Palmetto (Osceola) .1 | | | Needed | Unpaved (8) | | Severe | No |
| 1100 | Palmetto (Byrd) .1 | Yes | Possible | | | Shrubbery | Groin | No |
| 1200 | Palmetto (Nancy) .1 | Appearance | Possible | Long-term | Unmarked | Right | Slight | No |
| 1300 | Palmetto (Thistle) .1 | | Possible | Possible | Unpaved/ 1 handicap (10) | Left | Slight | Worn |
| 1400 | Palmetto (Chancellor) .1 | Yes | Possible | Possible | | Shrubbery | Groin/ Moderate | No |
| 1500 | Palmetto (Dorothy) .1 | Yes | Possible | Long-term | | Shrubbery | Moderate | No |
| 1600 | Palmetto (Marianne) .1 | Appearance | Possible | Possible | | | Groin | No |
| 1700 | Palmetto (Lybrand) .1 | | Concrete | Handicap | Unpaved/ 1 handicap (10) | | Slight | Worn |
| 1800 | Palmetto (Catherine) .1 | Yes | Wooden | Possible | | Shrubbery | Groin | No |
| 1900 | Palmetto (Mitchell) .1 | Yes | Possible | Yes | Possible | | Moderate | No |
| 2000 | Palmetto (Baynard) .1 | Yes | Asphalt | Possible | Private | | Slight | Worn |
| 2100 | Point (Edings) .1 | | Concrete | Handicap | Unpaved/ 1 handicap (7) | | Groin | Worn |
| 2200 | Point (Jenkins) .1 | Appearance | Possible | Possible | Unmarked/ Expand | Shrubbery/ Pole | Severe | No |
| 2300 | Point (Seabrook) .1 | Appearance | Possible | Possible | Unmarked | Right | Slight | No |
| 2400 | Point (Murray Street) .1 | Appearance | Possible | Possible | Unmarked | Left and Right | Slight | No |
| 2500 | Point (Holmes Street) .1 | Appearance | Possible | Possible | Unmarked | Left Shrubs/ Right Drive | Slight | No |
| 2600 | Point (Loring) .1 | Appearance | Possible | Possible | Unmarked | Left and Right | Groin | No |
| 2700 | Point (LaRoche) .1 | Appearance | Possible | Possible | Unmarked | Left and Right | Groin on left | No |
| 2800 | Point (Neptune) .1 | Yes | Possible | Possible | | Shrubbery | Groin/ Rocks | No |
| 2900 | Point (Billow) .1 | Yes | Extend/ Wooden | Possible | | Shrubbery | Slight | No |
| 3000 | Point (White Cap St) .1 | | Possible | Possible | Unmarked | | Severe | No |
| 3100 | Point (Edisto Street) .1 | | Possible | Possible | Unpaved (5) | | Groin | No |
| 3200 | Palmetto (Mikell St) .1 | | Concrete | Handicap/ Extend | Unpaved/ 1 handicap (2) | | Accreting | No |
| 3300 | Palmetto (Townsend) .1 | Yes | Needed | Needed | | Shrubbery | Accreting | No |
| 3400 | Palmetto (Louise St) .1 | Yes | Possible | Extend | | Right (Drive) | Accreting | No |
| 3500 | Palmetto (Ebb Tide Street) .1 | | Asphalt | Handicap Extend | Asphalt/ 1 handicap (4) | | Accreting | Worn |
| 3600 | Yacht Club Road .1 | Yes | Extend/ Concrete | Needed | | | Accreting | No |
| 3700 | Yacht Club Road .1 | | Possible | Handicap Extend | Unmarked/ 1 handicap | | Accreting | Worn |

Vision Statement (Proposed)

The Town of Edisto Beach is a residential beachfront community that promotes public beach access for residents, property owners, and visitors through an on-going program designed to maintain existing access points and attendant parking, protect the beach/dune system, and respond to the needs for various users.

Goals (Proposed)

1. Protection and maintenance of the existing 38 access points in the Town.
2. Promotion of a healthy beach/dune system.
3. Prevention of degradation to recreational beachfront areas.
4. Respond to the needs of primary users.

Objectives (Proposed)

Protection and maintenance of the existing 38 access points in the Town.

1. Remove encroachments into access pathways and their associated parking areas;
2. Ensure litter control through the placement at each access point both immovable trash receptacles and signage delineating the importance of proper trash disposal and the fine for littering;
3. Install signs to inform users of beach use regulations and other expectations;
4. Enforce the Town's policy regarding encroachments, safety and proper use; and
5. Establish an inspection and maintenance schedule for existing beach access points and related parking areas.
6. Improve beach access through the construction of ramps or walkways where needed which protects the dunes and vegetation, and delineates the public's right to cross at defined access points.
7. Fund immediate and long-range improvements through grant programs first, while donations and local taxes or fees are identified .
8. Investigate the strategic acquisition of oceanfront parcels further, particularly any parcel that is located seaward of OCRM's setback line or where ill-advised, private construction of habitable structures might occur.

Promotion of a healthy beach/dune system.

1. Ensure litter control through the placement at each access point both immovable trash receptacles and signage delineating the importance of proper trash disposal and the fine for littering;
2. Install signs to inform users of beach use regulations and other expectations;
3. Enforce the Town's policy regarding encroachments, safety and proper use; and
4. Improve beach access through the construction of ramps or walkways where needed, which protects the dunes and vegetation, and delineates the public's right to cross at defined access points.
5. Fund immediate and long-range activities through grant programs first, while donations and local taxes or fees are identified .
6. Investigate the strategic acquisition of oceanfront parcels further, particularly any parcel that is located seaward of OCRM's setback line or where ill-advised, private construction of habitable structures might occur.

Prevention of degradation to recreational beachfront areas.

1. Review and update the information provided to beach user groups regarding efforts of the community to provide safe and reasonable access to residents and visitors.
2. Ensure litter control through the placement at each access point both immovable trash receptacles and signage delineating the importance of proper trash disposal and the fine for littering;
3. Install signs to inform users of beach use regulations and other expectations;
4. Enforce the Town's policy regarding encroachments, safety and proper use;
5. Establish an inspection and maintenance schedule for existing beach access points and related parking areas.
6. Improve beach access through the construction of ramps or walkways where needed which protects the dunes and vegetation, and delineates the public's right to cross at defined access points.
7. Fund immediate and long-range activities through grant programs first, while donations and local taxes or fees are identified .
8. Investigate the strategic acquisition of oceanfront parcels further, particularly any parcel that is located seaward of OCRM's setback line or where ill-advised, private construction of habitable structures might occur.

Respond to the needs of primary users

1. Remove encroachments into access pathways and their associated parking areas;
2. Ensure litter control through the placement at each access point both immovable trash receptacles and signage delineating the importance of proper trash disposal and the fine for littering;
3. Install signs to inform users of beach use regulations and other expectations;
4. Enforce the Town's policy regarding encroachments, safety and proper use;
5. Fund immediate and long-range activities through grant programs first, while donations and local taxes or fees are identified .
6. Investigate periodically the needs of users, (i.e., restrooms, showers, picnicking areas, services, etc.) and make decisions regarding their needs based on sound data and public feedback.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the information derived from the surveys, public meetings, discussions with town officials, observational assessments and comparisons with other beachfront communities:

1. Immediate efforts to improve beach access in the Town of Edisto Beach should address:
 - a) encroachments into access pathways and their associated parking areas;
 - b) litter control through the placement at each access point both immovable trash receptacles and signage delineating the importance of proper trash disposal and the fine for littering;
 - c) installation of signage to inform users of beach use regulations and other expectations;
 - d) enforcement activities to eliminate encroachments and ensure safety and proper use; and
 - e) establishing an inspection and maintenance schedule for existing beach access points (particularly with ramps and walkways) and related parking areas.
2. Long-range efforts to improve beach access should address the construction of ramps or walkways where needed to protect the dunes and delineate the public's right to cross at defined access points.
3. The need to install one or two ideally located restrooms (possibly with body/foot showers and potable water) should be investigated further, with decisions based on sound data and public feedback. Such facilities are not suggested to accommodate day-visitors primarily since no data was found to determine their number or their needs and impacts. Based on the information gathered for this plan, the middle beachfront area around Lybrand Street is ideal because of its heavy use and available space for development. Additionally, it is a major cross-island link to housing along the back side lining Big Bay Creek. Coral Street is another good location because it is one of the first access points visible to visitors driving into the Town along Palmetto Boulevard, and space is available for development without displacing parking.
4. Funding for immediate and long-range improvements should be sought through grant programs first, since residents and property owners believe that their limited local tax dollars should first address more pressing infrastructure issues faced by the Town.
5. Review and update the information provided to beach user groups regarding efforts of the community to provide safe and reasonable access to various residents and visitors. For the most part, all promotional information about the recreational and tourism opportunities in Town of Edisto Beach should include such information.
6. The strategic acquisition of oceanfront parcels should be investigated further, particularly any parcel that is located seaward of OCRM's setback line and where ill-advised, private construction of habitable structures might occur.

Implementation Strategies

After a critical review of this proposed plan, town officials should adopt it as a guide to enhancing beach access in the Town. One thing is certain, more people will come to Edisto Beach for recreation opportunities – as residents and visitors.

Adopt-a-Beach

The Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management's (OCRM) Adopt-A-Beach program allows groups or organizations to make a significant contribution to the preservation of the State's wonderful coastal environment. Litter is caused by people and can only be stopped by people. Assistance is needed. Everyone that participates in a beach cleanup becomes a powerful advocate for the beach and against litter. The program itself and the Adopt-A-Beach signs remind those who are tempted to litter there are people out there who care. Adopt-A-Beach inspires people to keep the beaches clean.

OCRM is looking for civic clubs, school groups, neighborhood associations and other organizations to adopt a stretch of beach. At least twice a year, the group will spend a few hours picking up litter on your adopted beach.

To get involved, a representative of the organization should contact the Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management. OCRM will help to find an area to adopt, and it will also help publicize the group or organization by posting a sign near the adopted beach to tell everyone that the group is in charge of keeping this stretch of beach clean. If groups or organizations would like to participate, call OCRM at (843) 744-5838. The agency will give all the information needed to Adopt-A-Beach and make South Carolina a cleaner place.

Edisto Beach State Park

Donations are needed because to complete several educational projects. Tens of thousands of school children come to our state parks each year to discover the history, geography, science and culture of South Carolina. Whether it is getting their feet wet in a mountain stream, or seeing one of the largest colonies of Purple Martins in North America. The most important job our park rangers have is working with students of all ages. Park Services has launched an ambitious effort to upgrade its education programs in several state parks and we need your help. Donations turn our parks into outdoor classrooms.

Edisto Beach State Park: Through a partnership with the Department of Natural resources, PRT is designing an Education and Interpretive facility that would focus on ACE Basin and stewardship of the coastal environment. DBR has obtained \$1.5 million in grants from the national Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration for design and construction of the building. The design also calls for a dock near the center for the boat "Anita" which will be used for educational tours.

This remote sea island park, rich in Native American history, was originally developed in the 1930's by the Civilian Conservation Corps. A variety of shells dot the

1.5 mile beach and some of the tallest palmetto trees in the state can be seen throughout the park. This 1,255-acre park includes a dense maritime forest and an expansive salt marsh where visitors can explore the wonders of nature. The park offers a day-use area for beach access and a four-mile nature trail that winds through the maritime forest with beautiful vistas overlooking the salt marsh. For overnight guests the park offers vacation cabins and a campground.

Office Hours: M-Fr 9am-5pm

Admissions: \$3/adult; \$2.50 SC seniors; age 5 & younger free

Days and Hours of Operation: M-Su 8am-6pm (extended from 6am to 10pm during Daylight Savings Time)

Conceptual Design for Beach Access Points

A conceptual design of an access point is proposed and presented on the following pages. The concept drawings provide a design that can address some of the issues identified previously, particularly encroachment by private property owners and marked parking spaces. Each access point could use this concept as a general plan for development, while allowing for variation in plants that border the pathway/parking area, the number of spaces marked for parking, and the type of surface within the parking area. If the access point is not large enough for parking, then the material to delineate the boundary of the access point can be used, as shown.

APPENDICES

The South Carolina Beachfront Management Act

In July 1988, the South Carolina Beachfront Management Act (BMA) became law. The Act was subsequently amended by the state legislature in 1990. The law requires the use of scientific studies of coastal processes to establish precise building setback lines along the coast. In addition, it prohibits the construction of seawalls, limits the size of buildings within the predicted erosion zone and adopts a policy of retreat away from the erosional beach.

The Act is intended to protect both life and property, protect unique habitats and preserve the beach for future use by all citizens. A number of provisions in the Act address the preservation of a dry-sand beach and public access opportunities, measures to renourish eroding beaches, and the protection of natural vegetation within the beach/dune system. One key provision of the Act specifically requires the adoption of local comprehensive beachfront management plans by local governments. If a local government wants to participate in the state bonding programs created for beach renourishment or other beach funding programs, the governing body must adopt and enforce a local beachfront management plan that is consistent with the State Beachfront Management Act. The local comprehensive beach management plan, at a minimum, must include all of the following (Section 48-39-350(A)):

1. an inventory of beach profile data and historic erosion rate data provided by the Council (OCRM) for each standard erosion zone under the local jurisdiction;
2. an inventory of public beach access and attendant parking along with a plan for enhancing public access and parking;
3. and inventory of all structures located in the area seaward of the setback line;
4. an inventory of turtle nesting and important habitats of the beach/dune system and a protection and restoration plan, if necessary;
5. a conventional zoning and land use plan consistent with the purposes of this chapter for the area seaward of the setback line;
6. an analysis of beach erosion control alternatives, including renourishment for the beach under the local government's control;
7. a drainage plan for the area seaward of the setback zone;
8. a post-disaster plan, including plans for cleanup, maintaining essential services, protecting public health, emergency building ordinances, and the establishment of priorities, all of which must be consistent with this chapter;
9. a detailed strategy for achieving the goals of this chapter by the end of the forty-year retreat period; and
10. a detailed strategy for achieving the goals of preservation of existing public access and the enhancement of public access to assure full enjoyment of the beach by all residents of this State.

The South Carolina Beachfront Management Act requires that the state plan and local plans be **reviewed and updated every five years**. The reviews can be done to take advantage of changes in the plan caused by:

- A. natural events such as hurricanes, northeast storms and other weather events;
- B. increases or decreases in erosion rates (after July 1, 1991, the lines can only be changed every 8-10 years);
- C. Man-made actions resulting in changes to the area seaward of the setback line;
- D. Opportunities to take advantage of situations or new information that did not exist when the plan was being prepared.

Edisto Beach: Beachfront Management Plan and 1995 Evaluation

As stated previously, the beachfront management plan for Edisto Beach, South Carolina was submitted for approval on June 13, 1991. A review and update of this plan, as required every five years by the State Beachfront Management Act, was commissioned by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management (OCRM) in 1995. The following sections are the comments submitted by the reviewer to OCRM and the Town of Edisto Beach.

Beach Profile and Historic Erosion Rate Data

After a groin repair and renourishment project was completed in May, 1995, the Town was required by OCRM to monitor the project using the agency's 23 survey monuments located along its beachfront. However, the Town planned to go beyond the minimal requirements of OCRM by collecting erosion rate data from approximately 100 survey points. Coastal Science & Engineering, Inc., conducted the surveying beginning in July, 1995.

Public Beach Access and Parking

During a review of the Town's BMP in 1995, 35 public beach access points were found within the municipal town limits of Edisto Beach. Access points were no more than one quarter mile apart in the first eight blocks of the Town, and approximately 300 feet apart from that block to the southern end of the island. In addition, Edisto Beach State Park is located adjacent to the town on the northern end and offers complementary public beach access opportunities.

In the beach management plan submitted in 1991, the Town noted that nearly all of its access points were unimproved, with only one having a dune walkover. Construction had been initiated to improve the access point at Bailey Street by adding paved parking for four vehicles, a walkover, signs, trash cans, benches, a bike rack. Further, there were 11 private beach access points consisting of vacant beachfront lots which the general public crossed to

reach the shore. Lastly, there were 113 on-street parking areas inventoried, with 11 access points having improved off-street parking adjacent to the on-street parking.

Realizing that improvements to its access points were needed, the Town established a policy to improve a minimum of two access points each year, as funds were made available. To secure funding, the Town has actively pursued grants and special fund allocations to supplement budget limitations. Since approval of its plan, the Town has been awarded over \$150,000 for its beach access improvements, including: \$90,000 from the SCPRT Recreation Land Trust funds to purchase beachfront lots for public access; \$25,000 from the SCPRT Land and Water Conservation Fund to improve four access points, and \$31,760 to construct bicycle paths adjacent to the improve state highway.

With these funds and others, improvements have been made at these access points: Mikell Street (physically disabled parking, graveled parking, concrete sidewalk, and wooden walkover); Louise Street (wooden walkover); Bailey Street (asphalt parking, physically disabled parking, wooden walkover, bicycle rack, bench, and environmental interpretative signs); Yacht Club Road (wooden walkover and bicycle rack). Further, the following improvements are planned when additional funding is secured: Edings Street (parking and walkover); Mitchell Street (walkover); Lybrand Street (parking and walkover); and Cheehaw Street (parking only). All access points in the town have been identified with uniformly designed signage.

A Streets and Roads Committee, composed of local citizens and chaired by a member of town council, has made recommendations to Town Council on the priority of beach access improvements. Moreover, on October 13, 1994, Town Council took action to develop standards for improvements to beach access points such as design criteria, materials to construct improvements, and maintenance requirements. Lastly, on November 1, 1994, a joint committee was formed from members of the Planning Commission and the Streets and Road Committee to develop a master plan for utilizing the town accessways. **On November 29, 1994 the joint committee presented to the Planning Commission an Access Management Plan.**

Structures Seaward of the Setback

When the Town of Edisto Beach submitted its beach management plan in 1991, there were 222 structures included in the inventory of oceanfront structures. Nearly 80 percent (176) of these structures were habitable buildings less than 5000 square feet in area. Seventy (70) habitable structures (40 percent) less than 5000 square feet in area were located seaward of the baseline, 58 habitable structures less than 5000 square feet (33 percent) were within 50 feet of the setback line, and 48 habitable structures less than 5000 square feet (27 percent) were seaward of the setback line.

For this report, it was indicated that only one new habitable structure had been built seaward of the setback since the submission of the Town's plan. However, this structure was permitted prior to the inclusion of a Beach Management Overlay District as a part of the Town's zoning ordinance. **As discussed in the beach access inventory above, there have**

been several parking areas, wooden walkovers and other amenities built to improve public beach access.

Structures to control erosion totaled 59, with 29 groins/jetties, 14 nonfunctional revetments, 10 nonfunctional seawalls, five functional seawalls, and one functional seawall/revetment. The State Beachfront Management Act prohibits the construction of new erosion control devices.

Inventory of Turtle Nesting and Important Habitats

The Town of Edisto Beach has a very active turtle-nesting project comprised of local volunteers who assist the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department. The Town adopted a beach lighting ordinance in February 1992; however, no information was provided regarding additional measures to identify or protect the critical habitat of other endangered, threatened, or species of special concern.

Conventional Zoning and Land Use Plan

Since the submission of its beach management plan in 1991, Edisto Beach has adopted a **Beach Management Overlay District** as a section of its zoning ordinance which was revised in September 1, 1993. The ordinance states that "the purpose of this overlay zoning district is to implement and enforce the Retreat Strategy and Storm Hazard Mitigation Plan adopted by the Town of Edisto Beach so as to protect life and property located within the close proximity to the baseline established by the South Carolina Coastal Council" (now Ocean and Coastal Resource Management). Further, its secondary purpose is "to provide a means of educating all persons owning property along the beach about the hazards connected with erosion, storms, and flooding in areas so close to the beach." **This beach management overlay zoning district for the town is to be compatible with the intent of the South Carolina Beach Management Act, Section 48-39-10 et. seq., as amended, with full compliance with this Act being required whenever applicable.**

This beach management overlay district contains provisions regarding setback lines, permit requirements, relationship with other zoning districts, nonconforming buildings and uses, and parking. On May 12, 1994 the beach management overlay district ordinance was amended to include an additional method to calculate the rear setback line for new construction and the reconstruction of existing structures within the district.

Beach Erosion Control

After a groin repair and renourishment project was completed in May, 1995, the Town was required by OCRM to monitor the project using the agency's 23 survey monuments located along its beachfront. However, the Town plans to go beyond the minimal requirements of OCRM by collecting erosion rate data from approximately 100 survey points. Coastal Science & Engineering, Inc., is conducting the surveying beginning in July, 1995.

Structures to control erosion totaled 59, with 29 groins/ jetties, 14 nonfunctional revetments, 10 nonfunctional seawalls, five functional seawalls, and one functional seawall/revetment. The State Beachfront Management Act prohibits the construction of new erosion control devices.

Drainage Plan

According to the beach management plan submitted for the Town of Edisto Beach, there were no stormwater outfall structures located seaward of the setback line. Reportedly, stormwater on Edisto Beach was managed totally by surface runoff into existing drainage basins and through natural percolation. No drainage problems were known and the existing basins seemed to perform adequately. Lastly, there was a recommendation that the Town adopt an ordinance to forbid the location of any type of outfall structures onto the beach area (which might adversely affect beachfront recreation opportunities).

At the time of this review, the Town had not followed the recommendation to adopt an ordinance to forbid outfall structures on the beachfront; however, town officials indicated that the recommendation would be incorporated into town policy through a resolution. Since the approval of its plan, no outfall structures have been placed on the beach.

Post Disaster Plan

Adopted in October 1987, the Edisto Beach Emergency Evacuation Plan established a hierarchy of responsibilities that were assigned to town officials and designed to protect the Town and its citizens from harm in a hurricane or other major storm activity. The town's beach management plan stated that "specifically, the Emergency Evacuation Plan establishes 'procedures for the preparation, staffing, organization, activation and operation of the Town of Edisto Beach Municipal Operation Center (MOC) during peacetime emergency conditions.'"

According to its beach management plan, there are details in the Emergency Evacuation Plan that address an element of post disaster reentry and recovery operations, the repair and replacement of public utilities, and damage assessments. Further, the beach management plan stated that additional elements in the Town's regulations and policies were needed regarding long-term recovery/restoration, reconstruction development standards (that utilize a database on all town structures), a schedule for repair/reconstruction, and a development moratoria.

Forty-Year Retreat Strategy

The Town of Edisto Beach instituted a retreat strategy in its beach management plan which forbids any replaced structures located on lots that abut the beachfront to move seaward from their original position. Further, new construction is encouraged to occur as far landward as possible. With the adoption of the **Beach Management Overlay Zoning District into its Zoning Ordinance**, the Town has shown a commitment to implement and enforce the retreat strategy and storm hazard mitigation policy found in the beach management plan.

Chart from
Town of Edisto Beach: Access Management Plan 1996
 Recommended Access Usage
(Presented at public hearing 9/12/1996)

| | <u>Location (street address)</u> | <u>Pedestrian Only</u> | <u>Improved Parking</u> | <u>Date improved</u> | <u>Priority</u> | <u>Private Encroachment</u> | <u>Notes</u> |
|------|----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| | | | | | | | |
| 106 | Palmetto (Coral-Pavilion) | | √ | | 2 | | |
| 126 | Palmetto (Fenwick) | √ | | | - | | |
| 200 | Palmetto (Mary) | √ | | | 3 | | |
| 300 | Palmetto (Whaley) | √ | | | 3 | | |
| 400 | Palmetto (Matilda) | √ | | | - | | |
| 500 | Palmetto (Cupid) | √ | | | 3 | | |
| 600 | Palmetto (Atlantic) | √ | | | 3 | | |
| 700 | Palmetto (Portia) | √ | | | 3 | | |
| 800 | Palmetto (Dawhoo) | | √ | | 1 | √ | |
| 900 | Palmetto (Cheehaw) | | √ | 1996 | - | | |
| 1000 | Palmetto (Osceola) | | √ | | 2 | | |
| 1100 | Palmetto (Byrd) | √ | | | 3 | | |
| 1200 | Palmetto (Nancy) | | √ | | 3 | √ | |
| 1300 | Palmetto (Thistle) | | √ | | - | | |
| 1400 | Palmetto (Chancellor) | | √ | | 2 | | |
| 1500 | Palmetto (Dorothy) | | √ | | 3 | | |
| 1600 | Palmetto (Marianne) | | √ | | 1 | | |
| 1700 | Palmetto (Lybrand) | | √ | 1996 | - | | |
| 1800 | Palmetto (Catherine) | | √ | | 3 | | |
| 1900 | Palmetto (Mitchell) | | √ | 1996 | 1 | | |
| 2000 | Palmetto (Baynard) | | - | | - | | |
| 2100 | Point (Edings) | | √ | 1996 | - | | |
| 2200 | Point (Jenkins) | | √ | | 1 | | |
| 2300 | Point (Seabrook) | | √ | | 2 | √ | |
| 2400 | Point (Murray) | | √ | | 1 | √ | |
| 2500 | Point (Holmes) | | √ | | 2 | √ | |
| 2600 | Point (Loring) | | √ | | 2 | √ | |
| 2700 | Point (Lacroche) | | √ | | 1 | √ | |
| 2800 | Point (Neptune) | | √ | | 1 | | |
| 2900 | Point (Billow) | | √ | | - | | |
| 3000 | Point (White Cap Street) | | √ | | 1 | | |
| 3100 | Palmetto (Edisto Street) | | √ | | 1 | | |
| 3200 | Palmetto (Mikell Street) | | √ | Done | - | | |
| 3300 | Palmetto (Townsend Street) | | √ | | 1 | | |
| 3400 | Palmetto (Louise Street) | | √ | Walkover | 1 | | |
| 3500 | Palmetto (Bailey Street) | | √ | Done | - | | |
| 3600 | Yacht Club Road | √ | | Done | - | | |
| 3700 | Yacht Club Road | | √ | Done | - | | |

2002 Beachfront Management Plan Update

A second review/update was conducted in 2002 by OCRM, as required by the BMA. According to the report issued by the Town, the update was conducted by responding to points raised in the prior review in 1995. Regarding public beach access and parking, the Town was asked, “What improvements have been made in public beach access and parking since the 1995 review? Has the Town closed any access points?” The following response was provided:

No public beach access points have been closed. The adopted beachfront management plan for Edisto Beach provides that there are 35 public beach access points. This account should be updated to provide that there are 38 public beach access points.

The following beach accesses have been improved since the 1995 review:

| PUBLIC ACCESS | DUNE WALKOVER/ HANDICAPPED ACCESS RAMP (H.A.R.) | PARKING SPACES HANDICAPPED PARKING (H.P.) |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| Edings Street | Dune Walkover/H.A.R. | 7 (H.P.) |
| Mitchell Street | Dune Walkover | N/A |
| Lybrand Street | Dune Walkover/H.A.R. | 10 (H.P.) |
| Cheehaw Street | N/A | 11 |
| Thistle Street | N/A | 11 (H.P.) |
| Osceola Street | N/A | 8 |
| Yacht Club Rd. (unnamed) | Concrete Path | N/A |
| Edisto Street | N/A | 6 |
| Billow Street | Wooden Path | N/A |

In addition to the improved beach access points adjacent to the Atlantic Ocean, the Town purchased property within 1,000 feet of the Atlantic Ocean and thereupon has established a public a public parking lot. This parking lot provides twenty (20) public parking spaces within walking distance of the beach.

Beach accesses have been surveyed and thereupon some encroachments were noted. The Town has taken action to require that encroachments, which have a negative impact on access, be removed. All owners of property with encroachments of any type have been notified that encroachments must be removed.

Edisto Beach adopted its Local Comprehensive Plan in 1996. Excerpts of this plan are enclosed to further demonstrate the Town’s commitment to maintain and provide adequate public access and parking for the future. (See recommended access usage chart above.)

Another question to the Town in the 2002 update asked, “Have these improvements standards (such as design criteria, materials to construct improvements, and maintenance requirements) been developed and subsequently approved by Town Council?” The response provided by the Town stated:

The Town of Edisto Beach Planning Commission and Town Council reviewed and approved a Beach Access Management Plan in 1996. A public hearing was held September 12, 1996 on the proposed plan. Finally, it was the position of the Town Council that more detailed Beach Access Management Plan is warranted to include design criteria and priorities for access improvements.

DHEC- OCRM Critical Area Permitting Regulations

(as related to the beach/dune system)

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL
CONTROL, OFFICE OF OCEAN AND COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR PERMITTING IN THE CRITICAL AREAS OF
THE COASTAL ZONE

THIS EDITION PUBLICATION DATE, JUNE 27, 2003

R.30-11. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR ALL CRITICAL AREAS

A. Preface: The critical areas are of vital importance to the State, and there is strong and growing pressure for the development of these areas. The Department has established these rules and regulations for permit applications in an effort to reduce the irreversible loss of productive tidelands, coastal waters, beaches, and dunes while meeting long-range State development needs.

B. General Considerations: In assessing the potential impacts of projects in critical areas, the Department will be guided by the policy statements in Sections 48-39-20 and 48-39-30 and the following ten considerations in Section 48-39-150:

- (5) The extent to which the development could affect existing public access to tidal and submerged lands, navigable waters and beaches, or other recreational coastal resources;

D. General Guidelines for Beaches and the Beach/Dune System

In addition to the provisions of the South Carolina Coastal Management Act of 1977, the policies of the South Carolina Coastal Management Program, and applicable rules and regulations, the Department shall base its decisions on activities in the beach/dune system on the findings and policies specified in Section 48-39-250 and Section 48-39-260 of the 1977 Coastal Zone Management Act, as amended, and the following:

- (1) The Department shall discourage new construction in the beach/dune system and encourage those who have erected structures within the system to retreat.
- (2) The Department shall promote soft-solutions to erosion within the context of a policy of retreat of development from the shore and prevent the strengthening and enlargement of existing erosion control structures.
- (3) The Department shall promote public access to the beaches of this state.
- (4) The Department shall consider state and local comprehensive plans. No permit shall be issued which is inconsistent with the state plan, and all permits issued shall be consistent with local plans to the maximum extent practicable.
- (5) The Department shall be guided by the prohibitions against construction contained in Section 48-39-290 and Section 48-39-300 which are based upon the conclusion that ill-planned development, whether habitable structures, recreational amenities, erosion control devices or other manmade structures, will now and in the future adversely impact the fragile beach/dune system. These structures interfere with the natural system and impact the highest and best uses of the system. In order to protect the highest and best uses of the beach/dune system,

the Department, in its management capacity, shall encourage minimal development therein.

- (6) The destruction of beach or dune vegetation seaward of the setback line is prohibited unless there is no feasible alternative. When there is destruction of vegetation permitted seaward of the setback line, mitigation, in the form of planting new vegetation to rectify the destruction is required as a permit condition. In no event shall any part of a building be constructed on a primary oceanfront sand dune.

R.30-13. SPECIFIC PROJECT STANDARDS FOR BEACHES AND DUNES

F. Landscaping, Earthmoving and Fill for Landscaping: Seaward of the setback line, the installation of materials and associated amenities, moving of earth and placing of fill to accomplish these installations are allowed provided all of the following requirements are met:

- (1) A comprehensive landscaping plan is submitted to and approved in writing by the Department.
- (2) The construction of a retaining wall which extends below existing grade will not be allowed;
- (3) No sand from the beach shall be used as backfill;
- (4) No native plant material growing on the frontal dunes may be disturbed unless it can be demonstrated that the condition of the dune will be improved;
- (5) Only native salt tolerant plant species may be planted on dunes and shall be approved by the Department staff;
- (6) Adequate measures shall be taken to contain fill and irrigation runoff;
- (7) Construction shall not alter or impact existing primary oceanfront sand dunes;
- (8) All work shall be in compliance with applicable local ordinances.

G. Fences, Lighting, Trash Receptacles, Sidewalks, and Signs. Seaward of the setback line the placement, maintenance and repair, and replacement of fences, lighting, trash receptacles, sidewalks, and signs are allowed provided all of the following requirements are met:

- (1) Construction shall not alter or impact existing sand dunes, dune vegetation, or the beach;
- (2) New sidewalks may not exceed six feet in width. New residential or private sidewalks must be constructed of wood. Existing concrete sidewalks attendant to public streets may be replaced within their original footprint;
- (3) Trash receptacles (not dumpsters) may be attached to access ways or placed on the beach when the local government determines there is a need for such receptacles;
- (4) Signs are limited to only those attached to attendant structures or mail receptacles or informational signs deemed necessary by federal, state, or local government for public health and safety. Advertisements are not allowed except on the walls or roofs of commercial structures;
- (5) No fence may be used as a retaining wall;
- (6) Any additional lighting seaward of the setback line shall be designed to shield the beach from illumination.

H. Emergency Vehicle Access Ways, Small Wooden Decks, Gazebos and Other Structures Which Enhance Beach Access.

Seaward of the setback line the placement, maintenance and repair, and replacement of emergency vehicle access ways, decks, gazebos, and other structures which enhance beach access are allowed provided all of the following requirements are met:

- (1) Emergency vehicle access ways shall:
 - (a) Be constructed at sites which preclude alteration of existing sand dunes and dune vegetation to the maximum extent practicable;
 - (b) Be constructed above the existing grade except for points of entry and exit;
 - (c) Be constructed of wood or other approved material.
 - (d) Be located at least one-half mile from any other vehicle access to the beach unless, after review by the Department, this provision is determined to be unreasonable due to site specific circumstances concerning health and safety needs;
 - (e) Be approved by the local government with jurisdiction;
 - (f) Provide for pedestrian access use.
- (2) Small wooden decks are allowed provided the following criteria are met:
 - (a) Be constructed of wood.
 - (b) Roofs will be allowed.
 - (c) Not exceed one hundred forty-four square feet inclusive of an associated walkway (this square footage is not included in the five thousand square-foot limitation on habitable structures);
 - (d) Be limited to no more than one of these structures per lot unless a limit of one would cause an unnecessary hardship as determined by the Department;
 - (e) These structures may not be constructed on the active beach or over primary oceanfront sand dunes, and if they ever become situated on the active beach they must be removed.
 - (f) These structures may be attached to the habitable structure provided they are not made an integral part of the habitable structure.
 - (g) These structures may not be enclosed or screened.

I. The Construction and/or Repair of Drives and Parking Lots.

Within the setback area, the construction and/or repair of drives and parking lots is allowed provided all of the following requirements are met:

- (1) On front row lots, new driveways and/or parking lots shall not extend seaward of habitable structures;
- (2) Existing drives and/or parking lots may only be expanded on the landward side;
- (3) No sand from the beach may be used during construction and/or repair;
- (4) No alteration of the primary oceanfront sand dune or its dune vegetation is allowed;
- (5) At the Department's discretion, a Stormwater Management Plan may be required;
- (6) The work shall comply with applicable local ordinances;
- (7) Best Management Practices (BMP's) such as hay bales, silt fences, mulches, or other appropriate measures shall be used as necessary during the construction phase to prevent sedimentation reaching adjacent waters and wetlands. Upon project completion the disturbed areas shall be stabilized as soon as possible with grass or other appropriate vegetative cover;
- (8) No new driveway or parking lot may be constructed seaward of the baseline unless a special permit as provided in Section 48-39-290(D) is obtained.

L. Sand Fences, Minor Beach Renourishment, Dune Revegetation.

In an effort to provide beachfront property owners with passive, low-cost dune stabilization methods, the placement, maintenance and repair, and replacement of sand fencing, dune revegetation, and minor renourishment may be allowed seaward of the setback line under the following conditions (Note: These steps may not be viewed as being undertaken for erosion control but rather as dune enhancement and stabilization measures. Since a broad beach and a healthy dune provide a storm buffer, these methods should aid the natural processes affecting the beach/dune system.

(1) Sand fencing requirements:

- (a) The fence material shall be biodegradable.
- (b) The fences shall be installed according to plans established by the Department staff.
- (c) The fences shall be installed in a manner so as not to impede turtle nesting. The Department may require sand fences be moved or removed entirely if the fences are found to impact turtle nesting activities or, in the Department's opinion, have the potential to impact turtle nesting activities.
- (d) The fence shall be placed above the highest up rush of the waves as determined by the Department staff.
- (e) The fencing shall not impede public access.
- (f) The fence shall be installed with the understanding that this is a temporary measure.
- (g) If fence material is damaged, debris shall be removed expeditiously from the beach area by the owner.
- (h) If the Department determines that the fence has a detrimental impact to the beach/dune system, it shall be removed by the owner as directed by the Department.

(2) Revegetation requirements: Property owners are encouraged to plant vegetation as a means of stabilizing oceanfront dunes. The roots of plant material tend to bind sand to dunes, while plant foliage serves to trap wind blown sand. Suggested plant varieties include, but are not limited to, American beach grass (*Ammophila breviligulata*), bitter panicum (*Panicum amarum*), and sea oats (*Uniola paniculata*).

- (a) Vegetation may be planted any time during the year and shall be planted, irrigated and fertilized according to nursery instructions or the Department's "How to Build a Dune" booklet.
- (b) The Department staff shall inspect the site first and determine that there is a need for vegetative stabilization.

(3) Minor renourishment is allowed in an attempt to build and maintain healthy dunes.

Minor renourishment requirements are:

- (a) Sand shall be compatible in size and grain color, shall be from an upland source, and its use approved in writing by the Department staff.
- (b) Minor renourishment shall be performed between November 1 and May 15.
- (c) The Department staff shall inspect the site and establish that there is a need for the project.
- (d) All projects shall be in compliance with applicable local ordinances.

O. Sand Dune Management.

(1) Walkways over dunes, as provided in Section 48-39-130(D), shall meet the following requirements:

- (a) All components must be constructed of wood;
- (b) Have a maximum width of six feet;
- (c) Conform with the contour of the dunes with a 2-foot vertical clearance between the surface of the dune and top of the walkway;
- (d) Displace no sand in a critical area;
- (e) Be constructed with as little environmental damage as possible;
- (f) Not be located within fifty feet of another walkway on the same parcel of property;
- (g) Be limited to no more than one of these structures per lot unless a limit of one would cause an unnecessary hardship as determined by the Department.
- (h) Be shore perpendicular, except as necessary for handicapped access.

(2) Projects to protect, restore, or build dunes shall conform to the following standards:

- (a) The use of natural beach vegetation to trap wind blown sand is encouraged. Where pedestrian traffic has destroyed natural vegetation, the use of temporary sand fencing or its equivalent may be permitted.
- (b) The construction of a dune by using beach sand and mechanical equipment shall be permitted only for restoration after unusual damage, such as that caused by a hurricane.
- (c) Artificial dunes shall not be constructed seaward of the normal spring high-tide line.
- (d) Any artificially constructed dunes shall be aligned to the greatest extent possible with existing dune ridges and shall be of the same general configuration as adjacent dunes.

P. Nonwater-dependent Structures. Nonwater-dependent structures, including but not limited to residences, restaurants, motel/hotel facilities, other commercial activities, and parking facilities, have been constructed in the past within the beach/dune system. The siting of new nonwater-dependent structures seaward of the baseline is prohibited unless a special permit is obtained pursuant to Section 48-39-290(D) and R.30-15(F) herein.

30-15. Activities Allowed Seaward of Baseline.

- A. **Wooden Walkways:** Wooden walkways no larger in width than six feet are the only structures allowed seaward of the baseline that do not require a SCDHEC-OCRM permit. See R.30-13(O)(1).
- B. **Small Wooden Decks:** Wooden decks seaward of the baseline require a SCDHEC-OCRM permit. These decks should be no larger than one hundred and forty-four square feet. See R.30-13(H)(2).
- E. **Normal Landscaping:** Normal landscaping requires a SCDHEC-OCRM permit pursuant to the criteria set forth in R.30-13(F).

Funding Opportunities

Recreation Land Trust Fund

The Recreation Land Trust Fund (RELT) grant provides technical assistance and administers grant programs for development of public recreational opportunities throughout the state. All grant programs administered by this office are reimbursable funds from various sources with specific qualifications and restrictions as described below.

- Annual Grant Cycle
- Can only be used for the acquisition of land for the purpose of public recreation
- Applications graded utilizing Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) reviewed by a grading team
- This is a 50-50 match program
- Eligible governmental entities are notified and letters of intent are solicited in December
- Applications are then mailed to those who respond and the application deadline is in March.

For more information please contact the: Recreation, Planning & Engineering Office, SCPRT

Park & Recreation Development Fund

The Park & Recreation Development Fund (PARD) grant provides technical assistance and administers grant programs for development of public recreational opportunities throughout the state. All grant programs administered by this office are reimbursable funds from various sources with specific qualifications and restrictions as described below.

- Grant Cycle Monthly
- Non-competitive program available to eligible local governmental entities within each county area for development of new public recreation facilities or enhancement/renovations to existing facilities
- Projects need endorsement of majority weighted vote factor of County Legislative Delegation Members
- This is an 80-20 match program
- Application Deadline is the 10th of each month
- Eligible Entities notified of new Allocation amounts each July

For more information please contact the: Recreation, Planning & Engineering Office, SCPRT

Land & Water Conservation Fund

The Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grant provides technical assistance and administers grant programs for development of public recreational opportunities throughout the state. All grant programs administered by this office are reimbursable funds from various sources with specific qualifications and restrictions as described below.

- Grant Cycle - Annually
- Land acquisition or facility development for public outdoor recreation
- Applications graded utilizing Open Project Selection Process (OPSP) reviewed by a grading team
- This is a 50-50 match program
- Eligible governmental entities are notified and Letters of Intent are solicited in December
- Applications are then mailed to those who respond and the application deadline is in March

For more information please contact the: Recreation, Planning & Engineering Office, SCPRT.

Recreational Trails Program

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is a SCPRT- administered, federal-aid grant program under the direction of the Federal Highway Administration. The program provides 80/20 funding for recreational trails, supporting motorcycles, ATVs, bicycles, equestrians, hikers, etc. Qualified organizations, local, state or federal government agencies are eligible. Applications are competitively reviewed by a grading team. Information regarding the program is available on the State Trails website at www.SCTrails.net.

Tourism Marketing Partnership Program

The Tourism Marketing Partnership Program (TMPP) provides grants to local governments and non-profit organizations to support marketing efforts including the development of promotional materials and advertising to attract visitors. Funding categories include sports marketing, festivals and events, and marketing promotion. Contact SCPRT.

Coastal Access Improvement Grants

OCRM is committed to improving beach access in South Carolina. OCRM has been proactive in requiring that local governments identify and inventory all public access points in preparation of local beachfront management plans. State policy also provides a link between the public access and the state beach renourishment requirements. Over the years, OCRM has provided coastal towns and cities with hundreds of thousands of dollars to help improve beach access through our Coastal Access Improvement Program. This program provides matching grants to local governments for projects intended to improve public access. These grants are issued annually on a competitive base. For more information, contact Director Rob Mikell.

How to Build a Dune

This booklet was developed by the Department of Health and Environmental Control's (DHEC) Office of Ocean and Coastal Resources Management (OCRM). It is a how-to manual for those who want to preserve South Carolina's beaches. The booklet contains instructions for projects that help nature increase the size and stamina of sand dunes. The researcher has taken the liberty to include a copy of the manual with the report.

Further information about beaches and dunes is excerpted from DHEC's *Understanding Our Coastal Environment* and the *South Carolina Public Beach & Coastal Access Guide*. Additionally, a newspaper article "Seabeach amaranth losing toehold in sand" is included. As Edisto Beach decides on repairing and maintaining its dunes, this information should prove to be timely.

Lastly, pages excerpted from DHEC's *Backyard Buffers for the South Carolina Lowcountry* provide a list of plants that may be appropriate place along the borders of access pathways.