

The Capital Top Stories

Communities battle erosion

Bay has eaten away 750 feet of shore in south county

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Two south county communities are taking on the Chesapeake Bay, trying to stem the relentless tide of erosion on their shores.

Franklin Manor and Columbia Beach, two residential enclaves near the base of the Shady Side Peninsula, have undertaken shoreline restoration projects, potentially with help from the state Department of Natural Resources.

Some residents hope that the community effort might also spur Maryland to protect the shoreline between the two neighborhoods at its 470-acre Franklin Point Park.

Over the decades, the bay has gobbled up more than 750 feet along a stretch of shoreline where Deep Creek and Deep Cove Creek pour into the bay.

The two communities are taking different approaches to confronting the problem. Franklin Point is proceeding with a plan to build a series of breakwaters to protect the northern flank of the community's shoreline.

"The community's board has told us to move forward," said Eric Michelson, chairman of Franklin Manor Shore and Erosion Committee.

"We are actively seeking grants from the Chesapeake Bay Trust to help pay for design work."

But the best thing about the project is that Franklin Manor residents won't have to pay any



File photo by Bob Gilbert — The Capital

Following days of incessant winds that blew the water away from shore earlier this year, beach erosion is evident on this stretch of Franklin Manor community beach.



Capital graphic

This map shows shoreline erosion in the Franklin Manor, Columbia Beach area. The white line is where the Chesapeake Bay shore sat in 1850. The small round shape in the white line was an island. Next to it, the break in the line is where Deep Creek used to meet the bay.

more than they already do to get the job done.

A 20-year, zero-interest loan from the DNR could keep costs down so that the current special tax district fees paid by residents will more than pay for the project, estimated to cost about \$20,000 a year for the \$400,000 project.

The plan calls for building a series of offshore breakwaters between the community fishing pier at the north end of the neighborhood and the Deep Creek outlet into the bay.

Sand will be brought in along the shore to form “tromolos,” sweeping connections from shore to breakwater. Those areas will be planted with grasses and other plants to secure the shore.

Mr. Michelson said the community association executive committee is expected to approve funds for the project this month. A meeting was held for residents Nov. 18 at the Deale library.

Meanwhile, Columbia Beach is working to repair a smaller stretch of their shoreline that has lost 700 feet or more since 1850.

Community Association President Horace McCaskill said they will use rip rap — large stones — to blunt the eroding effect of the bay’s endless wave action and occasional whopper storms, like Tropical Storm Isabel.

“We are going through all the bureaucratic hoops and are just awaiting the word from the DNR ... so we can get started,” he said.

The primary focus of their project will be to stabilize some 1,400 linear feet of shore with rip rap where 50-year-old bulkhead has deteriorated.

The stones will be laid on top of a structural cloth up against the bulkhead. The cloth will keep dirt and the rotting bulkhead out of the bay.

He hopes the efforts of both communities will persuade the DNR to secure the shore in between the two enclaves.

“By not addressing that area all that they have done is left a gap in (our) defense,” he said. “If we do our effort, maybe the state will tackle that erosion problem.”

Len Casanova, director of DNR’s Shoreline Erosion Control Program, said the state is looking to do just that.

The agency included Franklin Point Park on a list of possible projects for intervention by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers following Tropical Storm Isabel but immediate funding went elsewhere.

The Army Corps is currently updating its 1990 shoreline erosion analysis and is expected to pick 15 projects once that is done.

“We have a chance to get Franklin Point (funded). Its another hopeful shot,” he said.

He said the Columbia Beach plan is slated for funding under the loan program next year

and Franklin Manor's project is likely to be given the green light in 2008.

Overall, the state program has an annual budget of \$1.3 million to aid shoreline restoration projects, and he is hoping to see more funding added in coming years.

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