

Beach Scraping at New Brighton and South Golden Beach **Community Meeting Minutes**

On the 4th September 2007 Byron Shire Council in collaboration with the project consultants Parsons Brinkerhoff, held community meetings at **Ocean Shores Community Centre** and at **South Golden Beach Community Hall**. The purpose of the meetings was to inform the community about beach scraping, to find out from the community about the project area, and to address any questions the community may have about beach scraping.

The meetings were run as a general discussion and several questions (Q) were raised, for which answers (A) were provided from the project consultants (Parsons Brinkerhoff): please see below.

Ocean Shores Community Centre Meeting- 4th September 2007

Q: I remember that in the past beach scraping was unsuccessful and we don't want the dune vegetation to be damaged.

A: Our study will look at cost benefit analysis and the amount of sand available, also beach scraping will not destroy the vegetation.

A: It was successful (public response).

A: Spinifex which is on the fore dune can be covered and it will reappear (public response).

Q: Is there enough sand already on the beach to be able to continue beach scraping in the future?

A: The study will look at this.

Q: What about sand drift? Will the removal of sand from the beach prevent sand from depositing on the beach in the future?

A: Beach scraping will affect the near shore and offshore processes because beach scraping will accelerate the natural sand deposit process, but there shouldn't be any long term effects.

Q: During a storm how big does the dune need to be to protect development?

A: At least 50 metres for a 100 yr storm event.

Q: Doesn't the vegetation help trap the sand and stabilise the dunes?

A: It does but during storm events the vegetation cannot protect the dunes.

Q: What about the illegal beach accesses?

A: This is not really the scope of this project, the Byron Coastline Management Plan that is currently being prepared will cover this issue.

Q: What is the environmental assessment?

A: It looks at this stage to be a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) as opposed to an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). We think that there will not be a significant impact, however, it will also depend on who will be the determining authority. It may be a joint approval process with Council and other government departments. An EIA is more costly than a REF because an EIA involves more in depth information and therefore, takes longer to prepare than an REF.

A (from State Government representative): In about 2002 Council used beach scraping at Belongil Beach to make new Geotextile sand bags. The assessment was an REF.

General comments from community members:

- *It has been noticed that south of the rocks the dunes are in fairly good condition, but up north the dunes are bad.*
- *People are making the sand dunes their own private space and are clearing the dune vegetation for ocean views, erecting fences, placing tables and chairs on the dunes and making their own illegal tracks to the beach.*
- *Dune Care does not work on the mentioned above areas because the residents don't care and just pull out, or tread on, the new plants, and remove large old trees and shrubs.*

South Golden Beach Community Hall Meeting- 4th September 2007

Q: *Will the sand smother the present dune vegetation?*

A: This study will look at how the vegetation might cope, and will identify the best way to carry out the beach scraping without causing significant damage to the flora and fauna. For example, determine how much sand can be put onto the vegetation without significantly harming it, or if it is best to put the sand near the dunes and let the wind slowly blow it on to the dunes in a more natural process etc.

Q: *What about the marine fauna? Because in the past all living on the beach got pushed onto the new dune and there was no pipes or worm etc. left on the beach.*

A: The study will look at the potential impacts on marine fauna and we will try and work out what is the best depth of sand that can be taken without causing a significant impact, e.g. 100-200mm off the beach as apposed to 0.5 – 1m.

Q: *Will beach scraping occur at South Golden Beach just because it will occur at New Brighton? South Golden Beach seems to have its own natural cycle of the dunes washing away and then recovering again by its self.*

A: South Golden Beach will be assessed on its own. It will not be done only if New Brighton is, it will be done if it is required. From the preliminary investigations there is currently enough of a dune system to protect dwellings and the road from short term storm damage.

Q: *If you take the sand from below the water won't it leave a big hole and then the natural sand process will result in sand from the beach filling in the hole?*

A: Yes, this is a natural process, but the sand being put onto the dunes will not be taken from below the water, and the sand should only disappear if a big storm occurs. But it is natural for some sand to get washed back into the ocean during a storm.

Q: *How often would beach scraping need to be conducted?*

A: It depends on natural processes. It may be whenever it is needed. How often can not be predicted because the frequency of storms can not be predicted.

Q: *Are you going to assess the short term variation of the beach? For example, the beach can change from being 5m of beach to 20m of beach, in a short space of time.*

A: Data is collected and assessed every 2 years by taking new aerial photographs. So there is already substantial data of the present conditions and their will be for after the beach scraping.

Q: *What kind of recovery period for marine fauna would you be looking for?*

A: We will put in a monitoring program after doing an environmental assessment. However, the most recent studies on the impact of beach scraping on marine fauna show that beach scraping does not have a significant impact on marine fauna. They are already so adapted to living in conditions where they are moved around all the time and often violently during storms and big seas. If we need to cover some vegetation we will revegetate the dunes.

Q: *We have a huge pipi population and nesting turtles, will they be affected?*

A: The studies indicate that beach scraping should not significantly impact marine fauna and we will ensure that it doesn't, this may mean only taking small depths of sand off the beach or trying to do it when pipis are not around. We will not be affecting turtle or Little Tern nesting areas, we will be contacting National Parks and Wildlife Service to find out what areas on the beach are important for marine fauna. We also will not be carrying out the beach scraping during nesting seasons and breeding seasons, or during storm seasons.

Q: *Once this environmental assessment and beach scraping has been completed, does this mean that this process is locked in and Council can carry out beach scraping whenever they want in the future?*

A: No, each time Council wants to do beach scraping on this beach they need to go through the whole environmental assessment and approval process.

Q: *Does Council have to do a DA to conduct the beach scraping?*

A: They have to go through an environmental assessment and approval process. Depending on the impacts and stakeholders they may need to get approval from internal at Council and other Government Departments. A Review of Environmental Factors is not public exhibited because an REF means that there will be no significant impacts. But it still needs approval. If an Environmental Impact Assessment is required then this document will be publicly exhibited and you will be able to send in a submission.

Q: *Can you suggest in your environmental assessment for Council to remove some of the rock wall?*

A: Council currently has a coastline management plan being prepared, it will cover those type of issues.

Q: *In your handout in the background notes it says that beach scraping isn't a long term solution, beach nourishment is.*

A: Beach scraping is moving existing sand on the beach to form the dunes. Beach nourishment is bringing sand onto the beach from somewhere else to form the dunes; it is adding sand onto the beach.

Q: *If you remove the sand won't you be making the beach steeper and therefore creating bigger waves and more erosion?*

A: We are not going to be taking a metre depth of sand off the beach. It will be approximately 0.5m at the most. So it will be a very small increase in incline and it will not be taken from the water so there will be no impact on wave formation and intensity. Beach Scraping will most likely flatten the beach (depending on the current formation of the beach).

Q: *Where will you be creating the new dunes? On the existing dune systems or in front?*

A: Traditionally it is on or near the existing dunes to create a gradual incline. We will not be creating big steep dunes or covering all the dune vegetation.

Q: *Isn't this (beach scraping) creating a false sense of security for the community?*

A: No, it is giving more protection to the community's houses. It may not be a long term solution, depending on climate change and sea level rise, you may need to retreat, but it may give you more time.

General comments from community members:

- *Last time beach scraping was done, it was done in a way that made the beach wider and there was no real impact on the beach, the beach even appeared to cope better in storms.*
- *In the past beach scraping at New Brighton has worked really well. The sand did get pushed onto the grass, but it always grew back.*
- *The sand mining in the past took the original dunes, it was completely flattened. This project is just trying to put the dunes back to their original state.*