

State & Local Officials: Stalled Fire Island Plan is "Dunesday" Scenario for South Shore Families

posted on 9/17/2014 4:59:30 PM

September 17, 2014



Panico, Zeldin Blast Feds for Years of Foot Dragging on Fire Island Dunes Project, Imperiling Sandy Victims at the Height of Hurricane Season

Farmingville, NY - Brookhaven Town Councilman Dan Panico and New York State Senator Lee Zeldin joined local officials and concerned residents today in blasting Federal officials for years of delays in implementing the Fire Island Dune Restoration Project. Pictured left to right are State Senator Zeldin, Councilman Panico, Islip Town Supervisor Tom Croci, and Mastic Beach Village Mayor Bill Biondi. The project, which would restore dunes that were destroyed two years ago by Superstorm Sandy and left several south shore communities unprotected, has yet to commence to protect the most vulnerable communities on the Mastic-Shirley peninsula.

Councilman Dan Panico said, "When I grew up, our Federal officials had horsepower and the ability to get things done. I'm confident that if former Senator Al D'Amato or the late Daniel Patrick Moynihan were in office we wouldn't be having this conversation. However, our current crop of federal officials has sadly turned us all into beggars, begging for the assistance that should already be forthcoming. People usually think about infrastructure from a public works perspective as roads, bridges, drainage, etc. What our federal officials fail to understand is that our shoreline is a critical piece of Long Island's infrastructure. In Brookhaven we have south shore communities presently in peril because of a lack of dunes, jetties crumbling in Mount Sinai and Patchogue, and a bay, with inlets and tributaries that are barely navigable. Enough is enough. That is why I am calling on our federal officials to put together, permit and begin a long term shoreline infrastructure project to address these crucial issues. The current litigation holding up the south shore dune replenishment is a direct product of the piecemeal, haphazard and remedial approach and policies of our federal government."

Construction of a 15-foot high dune on the barrier beach is part of the \$700 million Fire Island-Montauk Point (FIMP) project being conducted by the Army Corps of Engineers along an 83-mile stretch of the south shore of Long Island.

State Senator Lee Zeldin said, "Superstorm Sandy left the coastal communities and shorelines on Long Island damaged and vulnerable. After two years, our residents are still waiting for the federal government to fix our barrier beaches. Meanwhile, Jones Beach had new dunes and new roads by the first Memorial Day in 2013. Money has been flowing to the shorelines in other parts of New York and New Jersey, but not out east in Suffolk. It's been one excuse and delay after another. As we move through hurricane season here on Long Island, the clock keeps ticking. The

federal government needs to get its act together and get this done after failing to deliver for two years."

This past week, a federal judge issued a temporary restraining order against construction of the dunes while a court challenge by the Audubon Society is heard regarding their concerns of what the impact the dune project will have on nesting piping plovers in the area. The piping plover, a seven-inch long coastal bird that nests in depressions of beach sand, is listed as an endangered species.

"The Fire Island National Seashore is a beautiful natural habitat and is vital in protecting Long Island's South Shore," said Islip Town Supervisor Tom Croci. "While I recognize and appreciate the need to protect our wildlife, there is another species on Fire Island - human beings - that are also in need of protection from potentially devastating and life-threatening storms."

The Village of Mastic Beach Mayor Bill Biondi said, "I am outraged and upset that the Audubon Society decided to put a temporary restraining order against the Fire Island Dune Project at the last minute. I am working closely with all levels of government and agencies who are involved. This project would have been a tremendous help for the residents of Mastic Beach to move forward. After Super Storm Sandy, over 400 homes were damaged due to flooding by the Fire Island breach, which caused flood levels in Mastic Beach to reach eight feet along many roads in our village. There was no reason why the Audubon Society had to do this at the last minute. Working together would have been the best answer to accommodate the Piping Plover issues. I find it difficult to understand why the Audubon Society and U.S. District Judge Sandra J. Feuerstein would put people's lives second to Piping Plovers. I strongly suggest that all parties involved get this project done before the next storm to prevent future damage to homes and the lives of our residents."

Division of Public Information * Office of the Supervisor

One Independence Hill • Farmingville • NY 11738 • Phone (631) 451-6595 • Fax (631) 451-6258