



PRESS RELEASE

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Sustainable Coast opposes Corps permit for Sea Island

On May 15, the Center for a Sustainable Coast submitted a letter to the Savannah District office of the Corps of Engineers objecting to a permit that, if granted, would allow Sea Island Acquisition (SIA) to deposit as much as 2.5 million cubic yards of sand from an offshore area onto Sea Island's shoreline.

The SIA permit application also includes a proposal to build a third groin, some 1200 feet south of existing development on Sea Island. Center objections target proposed actions that would resurrect a hazardous, controversial oceanfront development project in that area known as the "Reserve at Sea Island."

This application modifies a 2016 proposal submitted to the Corps by SIA, which had been limited to building the third groin, south of the existing southern groin on Sea Island, with related minor modifications in landscaping. That application was intended to enable Sea Island to market the "Reserve" – eight premium oceanfront homesites – on a strand of eroding, unsuitable land known as the Sea Island Spit.

Then, SIA abruptly withdrew that application when, as predicted by the many Georgia environmental groups opposing the Reserve project, major storms devastated the fragile spit, leaving even less area above the ocean, at a time when sea-level rise is accelerating. In 2016 and 2017, Hurricanes Matthew and Irma tore away at the Spit with high winds and storm surge, carrying sand to the north end of Saint Simons Island and areas offshore.

Accordingly, the Center's letter lodged well-justified objections to the revised permit application because it renews the proposal to build a third groin on Sea Island, intended to withhold sand, providing nominal but unreliable stability to the spit. In combination with depositing large volumes of sand as requested in the SIA application, this would enable millions in profits generated by selling lots that are so vulnerable to storms that the area is legally prohibited from receiving federally subsidized flood insurance. Ironically, extensive storm damage to be repaired by proposed beach rebuilding is stark evidence of the risks that conclusively disqualify the southern end of the proposed activities.

"Whatever can be said to warrant rebuilding Sea Island's beach north of the spit, where long-established homes are at greater risk from shore erosion, it does not justify actions supporting reckless development of the Reserve project," said Center board member Mindy Egan.

As stated in the letter written by the Center's executive director, David Kyler, "The permit would invite unwise private investment, which would – unquestionably – put both property and lives at significant risk.... In the likely event of added storm damage resulting from development of the Reserve project if the southernmost 1200 feet of shoreline is re-nourished, unjustified public expenses would be incurred in response to escalated public-safety hazards."

In closing, the Center urges the Corps to deny the most dangerous portion of the proposal: "Unless the Corps denies approval of depositions south of the existing southern groin, we adamantly oppose the application. If depositions are prohibited along the southernmost 1200 feet... high-risk development and considerable public hazards would be averted."

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Copies of Center comments are available from the Center. See more about issues the Center is addressing at <https://www.facebook.com/Center-for-a-Sustainable-Coast-141003446180/posts/>