



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
MOBILE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
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MAY 26 1992

REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

Plan Development Section

Honorable Tom Bevill
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Bevill:

This letter is in response to a request you made on May 12, 1992, during our meeting. You asked for information on Dauphin Island erosion responding to issues raised by Mr. John Tyson in his letter to you dated May 5, 1992. A copy of Mr. Tyson's letter is enclosed for your convenient reference.

There is no question that the shoreline on the island is undergoing severe erosion at two locations. One is at the east end of the island near Fort Gaines and the other is about three miles west at the public use area with the fishing pier. There is no clear indication of the cause, however. Significant accretion has occurred about halfway between the two erosion sites. Dr. Scott Douglass, at the University of South Alabama, has recently completed a report for the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, COASTAL PROCESSES OF DAUPHIN ISLAND, ALABAMA, covering studies he made. His report attributes the cause of long-term erosion on the island, at least in part, to past disposal practice for maintenance dredged material from the Mobile Harbor ship channel. Dr. Douglass recommended further studies to determine more specifically the impacts of historical dredging.

Analysis of old charts reveals that Sand Island has migrated north toward Dauphin Island before. The last time, around 1850, resulted in changes of the shoreline on the main island. Sand Island has again migrated northward, affecting the shoreline of the main island. This migration is probably the direct cause for the erosion at the public park with the fishing pier. Relocating Pelican Passage or diverting the water flow, as suggested by Mr. Tyson, would be an expensive

operation complicated by the shallow water in the area which precludes use of large floating equipment. There are other alternatives which should be more effective in addressing the erosion problem and would be much more cost effective.

The Mobile District presently has in progress two emergency erosion protection studies, one at each problem site, which may offer help in the present situation. These studies are being conducted under the authority of Section 14 of the 1946 Flood Control Act, which provides for emergency shoreline protection for public facilities. Funds for the studies were allocated in February 1992 and they are still in the early stages. It is, therefore, too early to conclude what can be done to alleviate these problems.

The initial assessments are scheduled to be completed in about two weeks. At that time we will request additional funds to complete the feasibility phase of these studies. If these studies are favorable, we will prepare Plans and Specifications. The schedule from initiation of the feasibility phase of the studies to award of the construction contract is about nine months after receipt of study funding. Future construction will depend, in major part, on the non-Federal sponsor's ability to meet the current requirements for a 25 percent share in the total construction cost. While the sponsor will receive credit towards that amount for lands, easements, and rights-of-way he supplies, it has been our experience that this is usually a small portion of the non-Federal share and the remaining portion requires a cash contribution. We will keep you informed of the progress of these investigations.

If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call on me. Burdin/2772/mw/PD-FF

Sincerely,

Michael F. Thuss
Colonel, Corps of Engineer
District Engineer

Handwritten signatures and initials:
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JOHN M. TYSON

May 5, 1992

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JOHN M. TYSON, JR.

Honorable Tom Bevill
Member, House of Representatives
2302 Rayburn Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Dauphin Island Beach Erosion

Dear Tom:

It was so good to talk with you over the telephone and recall the many events that have occurred since you and I served in the Alabama House and Senate. You have come a long way and handled your job with expertise and that marvelous sense of justice that you possess.

As explained to you, much of the public beach on south side of Dauphin Island has become seriously eroded to the point that the beach has been closed because of dangerous currents. There are many theories of the cause of the erosion of Dauphin Island, the latest being the deep channel interrupting the sand flow of Dixie Bar that normally feeds the island.

A floating island called Sand Island has moved very close to the main part of Dauphin Island, thereby increasing the water flow in volume and velocity; cutting Dauphin Island very deeply. The ancient maps show this island (Sand Island) joined with Dauphin Island to form a cove. Perhaps that would be the solution. The other solution is to possibly divert the water flow coming from the east through a cut in Sand Island, thereby removing the high velocity flow away from the beach area.

Mayor Doris Anderson and the Town Council have requested that I invite you to come to make a personal inspection of the island, along with our Congressmen and perhaps Senator Shelby or Senator Heflin.

As you know, Dauphin Island is in the vortex of the natural gas discoveries in this area and major oil companies are pumping more than four billion dollars into exploration