



*Sunset Capital of Alabama™*

## Town of Dauphin Island

1011 Bienville Boulevard, Dauphin Island, Alabama, 36528

Phone: (251) 861-5525 Fax (251) 861-2154

<https://www.townofdauphinisland.org/westendnourishment>

Dear West End of Dauphin Island property owner,

### **Re: Dauphin Island West End Nourishment Project**

The West End of Dauphin Island has experienced tremendous shoreline retreat due to storms, erosion, and barrier island rollover migration over the past several decades. The Town of Dauphin Island is actively working on the design of the West End Nourishment Project to bring sand back to this area of the island. This project focuses on nourishing the most vulnerable reach of the West End – mid-Island to Katrina Cut. Healthy beaches and dunes on our barrier island will provide unique habitats for a variety of species and help to protect vital natural resources within the Mississippi Sound and mainland Mobile County.

Project activities completed to date include 30% design, design phase alternatives analysis, modeling, and field investigations to inform full design parameters. The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) permitting process will commence by the end of 2024. Funding opportunities for construction are being actively explored by the Town and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (ADCNR). This project was identified as a priority measure in the USACE final Alabama Barrier Island Restoration Assessment Report, 2020.

The goal of this project is to restore and protect beach and dune habitats on the West End of Dauphin Island and enhance the ecosystem function of Alabama's barrier island. Without this project, erosion will continue and the risk of severe avulsion events from major storms will remain high. To create an engineered beach under the Alabama Beach Act, the Town must establish a designated mean high tide line (MHTL). The designated MHTL establishes the separation between private and public property in perpetuity – even if more erosion occurs in the future. Without this project, Dauphin Island will continue to lose land to the Gulf of Mexico – and by law, all submerged land is owned by the State of Alabama and held in trust for the benefit of the public.

An engineered beach constructed through the Beach Act will also allow the Town of Dauphin Island to seek additional funding from FEMA. The Town will be responsible for maintaining the renourished beach. Engineered beaches in Alabama already exist in Gulf Shores and Orange Beach, as well as now along the East End of Dauphin Island.

Below is an outline of the process the Town must follow to make this project a reality. Please read carefully and visit our website for more details.

# THE PROCESS

## Establishing a Designated Mean High Tide Line (MHTL)

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The Town will soon adopt a designated MHTL per the Alabama Beach Act for beach nourishment. The establishment of the designated MHTL affirms the State's ownership of submerged land that mother nature has already claimed seaward of the line. In other words, the State *already owns* all submerged land by operation of law – the establishment of the designated MHTL will only document and record an exact boundary of what the State does and does not own for purposes of having accurate land records and meeting the statutory requirements of the Beach Act.

There are several factors that were considered in setting the proposed designated MHTL. Our team's understanding of coastal processes of our barrier island were critical for setting this line, including the location of the natural mean high tide line and the major northerly barrier island rollover migration we have experienced due to decades of major hurricanes (e.g., the 1915-1930s and 1995-2005 storms). The proposed designated MHTL will ensure the resilience of the project to coastal processes into the future. Second, the establishment of the designated MHTL comes with maintenance responsibilities for the Town of Dauphin Island. This must be considered, as maintenance of the project comes with high costs. Third, the Town has been working collaboratively with ADCNR to ensure all requirements of the Alabama Beach Act are adhered to.

Maps of the proposed designated MHTL can be found here:

<https://www.townofdauphinisland.org/westendnourishment>

The State law process for establishing the designated MHTL requires the Town of Dauphin Island to hold a public hearing and then adopt the recommended designated MHTL. The Town will hold a public hearing on **December 11<sup>th</sup> from 6-8pm at the Community Center (412 LeMoyne Dr.)**. (A link to view the public hearing remotely will also be made available for those who cannot attend in person). See the Town's website for more information.

The State of Alabama will then hold a separate public hearing on the designated MHTL. After both public hearings, and upon approval by ADCNR, the designated MHTL will be recorded with the Mobile County Probate Office and Secretary of State, which will confirm in the land records that all property lying seaward (south) of the designated MHTL is owned by the State of Alabama.

## Obtaining Private Property Construction Easements

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The Town will need to obtain legal access to portions of private property in order to place sand on these properties via a construction and monitoring easement. A construction and monitoring easement conveys to the Town of Dauphin Island the right to access the easement area to build, monitor, and maintain the project in perpetuity, including:

- Sand placement for project and for future nourishment;
- Vegetation plantings; and
- Equipment placed on the easement area, as needed, to build and maintain the project.

Construction easements will only be for private properties landward of the designated MHTL affected by the project. If you are a private landholder in the project footprint, the Town will reach out to you separately with information regarding your property easement. We hope that the private landholders will understand the importance of a whole and resilient project and that they are receiving sand in exchange for these easements. Within the footprint of the designed project, full participation

by all property owners is imperative; otherwise the project design would be compromised and adversely affect overall performance. If an individual easement is not signed, no sand will be put on your property which will leave a deficit of sand on your property and negatively impact the resiliency of the entire project.

For the POA West Surf Beach properties, the POA membership must vote “yes” to authorize the POA easement due to the position of that property. Without this approval, the project will not be able to move forward and we will likely never get this opportunity again. This ballot is going out in December.

## The Design of the Project

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The primary goals are to restore beach and dune habitat along the Gulf of Mexico beaches and protect West End infrastructure with beach nourishment, sand dunes, and vegetation. Secondary goals include introducing beach sands back into the littoral drift of the northern Gulf of Mexico barrier islands to restore the mainland protective functionality of our barrier island system and improving West End beach and dune habitat including Gulf-front foraging and nesting habitats for seabirds, shorebirds, neotropical migratory birds, and sea turtles. The project is designed to restore a healthy, functioning sand dune and beach south of existing houses. Historically, there was such a beach and dune system just south of the houses (in the 1950s through the 1990s). The dune is designed to reduce island overwash and property damage in major hurricanes. The beach south of the dune is designed to protect the dune from routine wave action and storm surge. The current design has varying widths of beach from 170' to 590' (this wider value is in the Town's West Beach Park). Generally, south of the houses, the new beach will be about 200' to 300' wider than today's beach. The new project will restore 40 acres of dune habitat and about 200 acres of beach habitat over a 3.5 mile stretch of the west end.

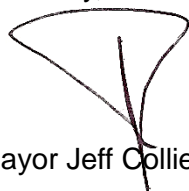
Sand is not expected to come back naturally. The sandy beach and dune system which existed south of the houses in the 1990s is permanently gone along most of the West End. Our detailed understanding of the West End beaches extends back to the 1850s. The West End historically has experienced major northerly barrier island rollover migration due to decades of major hurricanes (e.g., the 1915-1930s and 1995-2005). Shoreline recession rates were likely 200-300 feet in the 1915-1930s timeframe due to a series of major hurricanes. The shoreline recession from 1957 to 2022 averaged 260 feet along the West End beaches due to the major hurricanes between 1995 and 2005. There has been no significant natural shoreline accretion along the West End beaches in the past century. The exception is the beaches east of Quebec Ct., as they are accreting now due to the collapse of Pelican Island onto Dauphin Island that began in 2008. This project has been designed to take advantage of that ongoing geological phenomenon.

Detailed information can be found on the website for the overall project and process:

<https://www.townofdauphinisland.org/westendnourishment>

You are welcome to send all questions and comments to: [westend@townofdauphinisland.org](mailto:westend@townofdauphinisland.org)

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Collier". The signature is written over a faint, large, stylized outline of a beach or dune shape.

Mayor Jeff Collier and Council