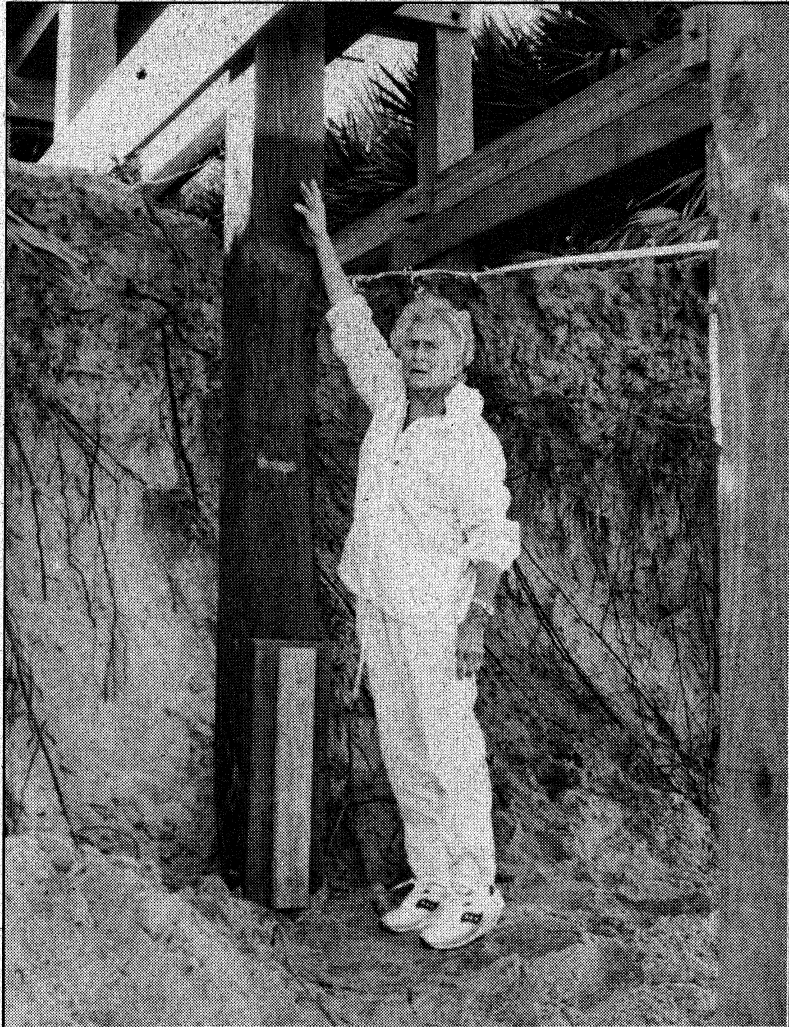


Sebastian River Area

●Grant ●Micco-Little Hollywood ●Barefoot Bay ●Sebastian ●Fellsmere ●Roseland ●Vero Lake Estates

1995 May Bring More Erosion



Press-Journal staff photo by Leigh Glenn

Sea Oaks resident Rachel Rand points to the old sand line under the dune crossover in front of the development.

By LEIGH GLENN
Press-Journal Staff Writer

When Rachel Rand wakes up in the middle of the night, she can hear the Atlantic Ocean pounding the beach near her Sea Oaks condominium.

Although her unit doesn't face the water, she wonders if the waves will someday reach her building.

"It's getting worse," Rand said of the erosion — which has increased since October.

Rand and her neighbors, Dr. Larry Stevens and his wife Pat, say that when the water rolls in at high tide, the beach disappears.

"We're all very alarmed about it and nobody does anything," Mrs. Stevens said.

Earlier this month, the state Department of Environmental Protection ordered the Sebastian Inlet Tax District to replace sand bypassed to downdrift beaches since 1986. But the district is appealing the ruling.

Above-average tides expected around New Year's Day have beachfront homeowners nervous. As an emergency measure, the DEP gave 15 property owners living north of Wabasso between Nov. 29 and Dec. 16 to put up to one foot of sand along the dune in front of their houses. All took advantage of the chance, Paden Woodruff, a senior engineer in charge of the DEP's special projects bureau of beaches and coastal systems, said.

Woodruff admits the measure is only a temporary fix for homeowners. "They're going to have to look at long-term solutions and

come up with a plan and assume responsibility to protect their property," Woodruff said. "We're here to help them and guide them and assist them in any way we can."

To the north of Wabasso Beach Park, Bill Glynn and his neighbors were among those who brought in sand a few weeks ago.

"We just put approximately 4,000 cubic yards of sand on our dune and our beach at our own expense," said Glynn, president of the Summerplace Homeowners Association.

As for action, there is no easy solution and any solution likely will be expensive, said Dr. Thomas Longworth, chairman of the Sea Oaks Beach Committee.

"The whole beach has to be done," he said. "How you do that I don't know yet."

"It's going to cost money," Longworth said. "It's worth it in the long run, otherwise we're going to lose tourism and taxes from the barrier island."

The Sea Oaks portion of the beach normally loses about 1½ to 2 feet of sand a year. In the last six months, however, six feet has been lost, taking cabbage palms and palmettos with it, he said.

Although the county and the state have not stepped in to help beachfront residents, Indian River County Commissioner Fran Adams agrees something must be done. She does not understand the "anorexic" approach of placing sand on the downdrift beaches only every three or four years. It does not allow time for the beaches to build up, she said.