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November 21, 2005

Mayor Neblett, Council, and citizens of Port Aransas. Thank you for allowing me to address the council this evening. My name is Richard Watson and I am a coastal geologist with 40 years of experience on this coast.

I understand that some people in the current administration resent the fact that I went to the media before consulting with them. That is not what happened. I have been speaking of this problem with city officials for about 10 years, including taking previous city councils and the mayor on a field trip to the beach to explain the situation, which resulted in the posts being placed near the dunes, which built coppice dunes, enhancing our protection against storm surge. I explained the current problem to Mr. Parsons months ago while giving him an aerial tour of the coast. I discussed my concerns in detail with the Mayor, the city manager and the city planner in Houston after presenting a report on Texas beach erosion at the Texas General Land Office's (GLO) Coastal Erosion Conference. I was then informed by email that Mr. Kovacs intended to truck all of the sand accumulated on the upper beach to the surf and went and saw the operation in action.

It seemed pointless to talk further, so I wrote a paper about the problem and circulated it widely. The press and the media came to me as they usually do when there is a problem with beaches and the coast. In addition, I began to get calls requesting that I speak to classes at TAMUCC, the Coastal Bend Bays Foundation, Rotary Clubs and UTMSI. I prepared a PowerPoint presentation to do that. I also created a website to disseminate more information so that everyone can learn the importance of protecting and growing our natural dune seawall. A great many citizens are supporting me in this. I have conferred with top present and past coastal geologists from Texas. They all agree with my assessment of the problem.. So far, I have donated tens of thousands dollars worth of professional time to this effort to protect our City from hurricanes.

Our beach management practices have greatly limited the re-growth of our natural dune seawall since erosion by Hurricane Allen in 1980. The natural dune ridges are our only protection from devastating frontal hurricane surge overwash which can destroy everything in its path. The Port Aransas Coastal Management Plan states: and I quote *"The City shall prohibit beach management activities which will result in the significant redistribution of sand or which will significantly alter the beach profile."* End quote.

Moving hundreds of dump trucks of sand from the upper beach to the surf at low tide breaks our own regulation as well as later and stricter GLO statewide regulations. In addition putting anything, including sand, below the high tide line without a federal permit breaks federal Clean Water Act section 404 regulations. On Thursday afternoon, the city manager received a phone call from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers informing him that the City was dumping fill below the Mean High Water line without a federal permit. Mr. Kovacs agreed to stop dumping until a permit is obtained.

I find it interesting that the City thinks that it OK to break our regulations, state regulations and federal regulations for beach management. How can it be that the administration believes that it knows how to

manage the beach and dune system better than the coastal geologists and other professionals who wrote the local, state and federal regulations which were purposely designed to protect the dunes and the growth of the dunes which are our only protection from hurricane surge destruction?

Port Aransas has grown tremendously in recent years and much of that growth is near the beach behind our natural dune seawall. Hurricane Carla in 1961 cut the dunes back 200 feet on Mustang Island. Hurricanes Beulah in 1965, Celia in 1970, and Allen in 1980 took advantage of an area with no dune protection and opened deep hurricane channels through the highway 361 at Corpus Christi Pass bridge, Newport Pass bridge and Packery Channel. The bridges were standing in mid channel with no attaching road in the middle of a wide and deep pass from the Gulf to Laguna Madre.



HIGHWAY 361 BRIDGE AFTER BEULAH
Note the bridge isolated in the channel.



HIGHWAY 361 AFTER EMERGENCY REPAIR
Temporary repairs after Celia.

We must have the maximum protection of a wide, and tall dune system with enough sand storage to protect us from hurricane surge overwash protection in a severe hurricane. We must have more than that. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have demonstrated that we need a natural dune seawall that can protect us from two severe storms in quick succession. The dunes rebuild slowly, quick succession can be not just months, but many years.

As you know the administration attempted to have a secret committee meeting to study the beach management problems. Numerous citizens showed up and insisted on attending. To his credit, Michael Kovacs allowed the citizens to attend and to speak. Tony Amos and I were in that group. There is a conflict in that there are numerous committee members who are on the payroll of the City, including David Parsons, Crockett Moreno, Ann Vaughn (indirectly), Dan Heilman from Shiner-Moseley, the City's regular environmental consultants and perhaps the City Manager. Many of the committee members have almost no SPECIFIC scientific knowledge of beach and dune dynamics.

Interestingly, the committee members had a great many questions to which no one on the committee had answers. Tony and I were able to answer most of those questions due to our vast experience studying this coast. Please put both Tony and me on the committee so that Port Aransas can obtain accurate information from the two people who know the most about our beach and dune system. Tony has offered to serve without compensation and I will be glad to serve without compensation as well. In that way, you and the citizens of Port Aransas will know that our true opinions are freely given.

Incidentally Mr. Kovacs invited me to his office in the afternoon after the committee meeting. He inquired about my pay rate and said that the City could handle that and would perhaps formally put me on the committee the following week. He followed that it would not be good for me to speak out against the

City if I was on the payroll. I told Mr. Kovacs that I would very much like to find a way to allow our natural dune seawall to grow for maximum protection while still maintaining a protected pedestrian beach and driving lanes. Yes, I have been speaking out and I intend to continue to do so; I am not attacking the City, but rather trying to protect the city and its inhabitants through education, as I have done since the mid 1960's, when I organized an educational campaign to get vehicles out of the dunes, which, in turn, began the county and state-wide recognition of the need to protect and grow our dunes.



Trent Moore (left) still remembers winning \$50 in third grade for that poster he made in 1970.

Our natural dune seawall is our hurricane savings account. The more sand invested in our natural dune seawall account, the better our ability to survive future storms when they come, and they will come.

What will be the legacy of this council? Will it be to allow nature to build the best possible natural dune seawall free of charge? Or will your legacy be to squander the sand that should be deposited in our natural dune seawall hurricane defense account by throwing it back in the sea?

You can find much more information on my website, TexasCoastGeology.com

Thank you,

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