

November 4, 2014

The Honorable Deval Patrick, Governor
The Honorable Dan Wolf, State Senator
The Honorable Tim Madden, State Representative
Members, Nantucket Board of Selectmen

Dear Governor Patrick, Senator Wolf, Representative Madden and Members of the Nantucket Board of Selectmen:

The beaches and bluffs of Nantucket are one of Massachusetts' most precious resources. The historic houses and communities along those beaches have been home to generations of residents who value the natural beauty of these locations. The Siasconset Beach Preservation Fund (SBPF) shares that focus and is making every effort to preserve 'Sconset Beach and Bluff, as well as the adjacent community, with a thoughtful erosion management plan.



View from the top of the bluff; project blends into the beach.

It has come to our attention that as the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) prepares to rule on the merits of the SBPF proposal our opponents are continuing to attempt to politicize the decision-making process with a "disinformation" campaign based on inaccuracies and fear. We believe that decisions in this process should be based on the applicable law and science as applied by the experts in the State agency not on the basis of political appeals. Our opponents present a false choice, indicating that our efforts to protect the community adjacent to 'Sconset Beach and Bluff will result in losing the beach or that retaining the beach requires losing our homes. In their extreme view it is "either/or". However, we are confident that our project can protect both and are assured by highly qualified experts that this approach can be successful.



Wide beach in front of geotubes

Residents along Baxter Road in 'Sconset look with concern at the impact of ever more severe weather patterns will have on the nearby 'Sconset Beach and Bluff. While recognizing that erosion is a natural process, there is no clear benefit from letting erosion occur. In fact, in 'Sconset, there have been serious downsides, including closing of half of

the historic and enormously popular Bluff Walk used in the summer by over 100 people a day, the threat to Baxter Road (which provides the only access point for Sankaty Light, a National Historic Landmark), and the loss of many homes and thousands of dollars in assessed property value and tax dollars to the whole island community.

Erosion does “happen” as some project opponents say, but we would add “only if you let it.” Where would the Dutch be if they took this defeatist approach? Why would we choose to ignore environmentally responsible methods that can effectively address erosion? The members of the SBPF have proposed a solution that is environmentally and scientifically sound. We have invested private dollars in implementing a system of geotubes and sand cover that will protect ‘Sconset Beach and Bluff without negative impact on adjacent beaches. This is an appropriately high standard and one which the DEP will have concluded has been met if they decide to approve SBPF’s proposal.

As the Department of Environmental Protection considers our request that the geotube system be approved as designed, we wanted you to have the central facts about this project.

- MA law supports the use of coastal engineering structures (this includes seawalls, revetments, bulkheads, groins, and geotextile tubes, which are considered a “softer” option than the aforementioned structures) to protect homes built prior to 1978.
- Geotubes are an effective way to limit the impact of erosion without limiting access to the beach. These tubes are made of soft, flexible material filled with sand and designed to withstand the impact of extreme storms.
- The material used for the geotubes is more effective than biodegradable products such as jute or coir, which will not withstand the storms that cause significant erosion.
- Full access to the beach is preserved. Since the geotubes were put in place in the early part of 2014, there has been no day when local residents or visitors were unable to access the beach and use it for walking, quiet recreation, birding and fishing. Even at high tide, access is fully maintained.
- The additional sand used to cover the geotubes (sacrificial sand) exceeds all requirements, is replenished as needed, and is designed to wash away naturally assuring that nearby beaches do not suffer from additional erosion due to this project.



We propose to re-vegetate the eroded bluff face, like in this segment planted one year ago.

- Monitoring measures the impact of the project for miles in either direction and there are funds in place to remove the project if our commitments regarding sand replenishment and impact are not met.
- Our opponents have circulated photos of the beach (and the fully eroded bluff) in this area to underscore their assertion that our project would destroy it. We have included some photos of the project as now in place to show how the beach is in fact preserved and blends into the landscape, as well as photos of the bluff in its pre-erosion natural state and a sample area where the face of the bluff itself is being re-vegetated, (something that we propose to extend).



Pre-erosion bluff with stair access to bluff walk

Dozens of local residents have written to DEP as part of the formal review process to offer comments in support of this important effort. We have every confidence that the science behind this project makes it appropriate for full DEP approval. SBPF is prepared to make its expert advisors and consultants (listed below) available to the DEP staff at any time to answer questions or concerns they might have.

Our team of professionals:

- Lester B. Smith, Jr., M.S. B.S. – Principal/Coastal Geologist and Maria B. Hartnett, M.A., B.A. – Senior Consultant/Geologist, Epsilon Associates; Environmental engineering and permitting
- Azure Dee Sleicher, P.E., ENV SP – Project Manager/Coastal Engineer, Ocean and Coastal Consultants; Coastal engineering and design
- Dr. Michael S. Bruno, Dean of the School and Engineering and Science, Stevens Institute of Technology. Founder New Jersey Coastal Protection Technical Assistance Service a model program which provides assistance to the State of New Jersey; Peer review of coastal engineering design
- Mitchell Buck, M.C.E., B.S., P.E. - Coastal Engineer and Robert Hamilton, Jr., M.C.E., B.S. - President/Coastal Engineer, Woods Hole Group; Bank, beach and off-shore monitoring
- Michael May, Nantucket Preservation Trust; Advice on historic significance
- Attorneys: Goulston and Storrs; Cohen and Cohen; Reade Gullicksen Hanley and Gifford.
- Jamie Feeley, Cottage and Castle; Construction management
- Pete Kaizer, Local waterman; Practical local knowledge and input into project design and evaluation

Sincerely,

David and Dorothy Bailey
Rob and Carol Benchley
Nancy Broll
Liz Claudy
Stephen Cohen
Barry Cooper
Tom Cunningham, President Sankaty Head Golf Club
Norwood and Marguerite Davis
Mark Donato, Owner 'Sconset Market
Caroline Ellis
Beth English
Robert Felch, Executive Director, The 'Sconset Trust
Sam and Ann Furrow
David Golden
Larry Guido
Win Hindle
Barbara and Amos Hostetter
Dallas Kirk
Dan Korengold
Richard and Linda McKay
Mary Warren Moffett
Katherine Murphy
Deborah and John Osborn
Holly and Marc Pagon
Dexter and Susan Paine
Josh Posner, President SBPF
Priscilla and Kermit Roosevelt
Eileen Rudden
Susan Ruddick
Girard Ruddick
Julie and Brian Simmons
Elizabeth Singer
Karen Urban
Laurie and Toby Webb
Philippe Wells
Helmut and Caroline Weymar
Walter and Donna Wick

Liz Winship
Loretta Yoder and Kyle Latshaw

Additional co-signers will be submitted as available.

Cc: Secretary Maeve Vallely Bartlett, Office of Energy and Environment Affairs
Commissioner David W. Cash, Mass DEP
Mr. James Mahala, Mass DEP, Southeast Region
Ms. C. Elizabeth Gibson, Town Manager, Town of Nantucket