



**Route 52 Environmental Process Task Force
Meeting No. 1 Report**

MEETING DATE: February 4, 2003
TIME: 10:00 a.m.
LOCATION: **Ocean City, City Hall**

ATTENDEES

Nick Caiazza- NJDOT
Andy Didun- NJ Fish & Wildlife
Dale Foster- Cape May County
Jim Boyer- U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
Carlo Poplizio- US Fish & Wildlife
Mike Sidani- Michael Baker, Jr.
Marshall Robert- Michael Baker, Jr.
Carol Beske- ACT Engineers
Anne Magliaro- Amy S. Greene Environmental Consultants (ASGECI)
Amy Greene- ASGECI.
Bill Smejkal- ASGECI.

MEETING SUMMARY

Carol Beske reviewed the CPT process and related that the outcomes of the various Task Force Meetings was to be considered by the Steering Committee which would direct subsequent revisions to the project. The revised project would be presented to the full Community Partnering Team (CPT) in a couple of months.

Mike Sidani reviewed the Causeway Replacement project and schedule. Baker has recommended that the centerline of the new bridge be shifted 28 feet east of the IPA centerline to make it feasible to construct the new bridge without damage to the existing bridge.

Once the project footprint is confirmed, the team would begin preparing the permits. The permits for the project are currently scheduled to be prepared in July of 2003. The Federal Highway Administration approved the Record of Decision on September 30, 2003 for the Final Environmental Impact Statement. Section 106, Section 4(f) and Endangered Species processes have been completed.

Marshall Robert reviewed the environmental issues and opportunities related to the project. As follows:

- Contaminated properties. There are several former or current service stations in the project area. One of these is located on the eastern edge of the Visitors Center Island. Baker will begin the environmental sampling in February. There is a former municipal dump in the upland area east of the Visitors Center. The NJDEP Solid Waste Division will have to be consulted. The former service station at the Somers Point Circle has already been tested and clean-up issues addressed with the NJDEP.
- The proposed Visitors Center is not in the approved sewer service area. Baker expects to pump the wastewater from expanded restrooms to the Ocean City sewer system. This will require a Water Quality Management Plan Amendment and a Treatment Works approval for the pump and collection system.
- The proposed project will divert 6 to 10 acres of Green Acres encumbered property. The NJDOT will have to acquire compensation property. Currently, the NJDOT is considering the Malibu Beach Property for these purposes. The Green Acres Program will work with the NJDOT to determine the total amount of diversion. It is expected that the Scenic Overlook is a recreational element and all parking, ramps and pedestrian amenities will not be considered as a diversion.
- Tidelands will have to be acquired for all open water areas. These applications will be made at the same time as the Waterfront Development and CAFRA permits. Baker would like to combine as many of public hearings as practical into a single permit hearing to increase convenience for the public and regulatory staff.
- The Coast Guard permit application has been submitted and is under review for two 55-foot high fixed bridges over the navigation channels. The Coast Guard has final review approval for the bridge structure and for removal of the existing bridges. It was pointed out that the Coast Guard has a history of making applicants remove former bridge piles to 5 feet below the mud line. If they enforce this restriction it could prevent using the former bridge piles for fish structure. They will have their own public participation process beginning with the Notice to Mariners which will go out soon to property owners _ mile up and downstream of the proposed bridge.
- The Army Corps of Engineers maintains the Intra-coastal Waterway and Ship Channel. Their approval is required for any dredging needed to realign the channels. The Corps will issue an Individual Permit to cover all aspects of project - boat ramps, fill, bulkheads; fishing pier regardless if there are nationwide permits available for certain aspects of the project.
- The bay islands are migrating to the east. Boat wake has contributed to the movement. The NJDOT will include erosion control measures as much as practical in the project area.

- Ocean City maintains a dredge material disposal pond on the Visitors Center Island. The NJDOT has to allow vehicular access for construction equipment. It may be possible to construct barge access to the islands adjacent to the proposed fishing pier or bulkhead.
- Construction Staging is intended to minimize disruption to navigation. However, there will be a time when both navigation channels will have to be shut down for a 30 to 60 day period in order to dredge the channels and construct the bridges
- Once construction begins, it is likely that the NJDOT will temporarily prohibit fishing in construction areas for safety and security reasons.
- Fishing will be allowed from the sidewalk on the northbound side. Fishing will not be allowed from the shoulders of the roadway and signing will be installed to discourage fishermen from crossing to the other side of the bridge at tide change.
- A coastal heron rookery has been documented on the Visitors Center Island near the visitors center and on the former city dump location. Baker and ASGECI are investigating the intensity of the activity and are considering the impacts and the appropriate regulatory review process.
- There are several natural resources impacted that may cause regulators to place construction timing restrictions on the contractor. The NJDOT and the NJDEP will have to review these restrictions to make it practical to construct the bridge.

Opportunities for improving the for recreational elements.

- Ramps will be constructed from the bridge down to two of the islands to provide fishing and passive recreation. A fishing pier will be constructed on Rainbow Channel from the Visitors Center Island. Pedestrian paths and bulkheads will be constructed to improve access to the waterfront.
- The parapet around the scenic overlook could be designed to hold bird watching telescopes.
- Collectively, more than 80 parking spaces will be provided at two lots. Launching of small boats without trailers will be allowed at Elbow Thorofare.
- A modern boat ramp is being included in Somers Point. This facility is needed to relieve some of the pressure off the boat ramp in Kennedy Park. Additional fishing opportunities may be included along the pedestrian walkway in the vicinity of the boat ramp.
- Profile of the Route 52 Causeway will be lowered in the Rainbow Channel section to discourage larger fishing boats that generate significant wake. Smaller and lighter boats will likely have sufficient clearance under the bridge.

Mitigation Elements

The Route 52 Causeway will impact several special areas that may require mitigation in one form or another. These include Green Acres property, wetlands, shallow water habitat, nesting habitat, essential fish habitat and other resources.

- Malibu Beach is a potential mitigation site where several of these mitigation elements could be provided. Attendees discussed the site and some then went in the field to visit the site. Malibu Beach, a 28 acre site, is located near the northern end of the Ocean City Longport Bridge. It appears that several acres of wetlands could be created if a rubble berm is removed. The wetland in this area is adjacent to an over-wash open water and may be considered freshwater. Mitigation strategies would have to be approved to allow coastal mitigation in a freshwater system. There is a need to expand the parking lot for fishing pier at Ocean City/Longport Bridge. A disturbed portion of the Malibu Beach site near the existing lot might be suitable to provide overflow parking. Building this lot in the first phase of construction could compensate for the temporary loss of fishing access along the causeway during construction.
- Acquisition would help meet the Green Acres interests for recreational, mitigation and preservation.
- Where possible, additional wetlands mitigation will be constructed on portions of the bay islands not being used for other purposes. These purposes include pedestrian paths, parking lots, ramps, drive ways, fishing piers, dredge disposal, water quality treatment, heron habitat and erosion control.

ACTION ITEMS

- Baker will send Coast Guard correspondence, permit application and Notice to Mariners to Jim Boyer
- U.S. Army Corps will investigate whether there are any permit or violation actions pending on the Malibu Beach Site.
- A meeting with the resource agencies to determine the mitigation potential of Malibu Beach should be scheduled

We believe the foregoing to be an accurate summary of discussions and related decisions. We would appreciate notification of exceptions or corrections to the minutes within three (3) working days of receipt. Without notification, we will consider these minutes to be record of fact.

Marshall Robert
Task Force Chairperson