

Ophelia Inflicts Major Damage to Parts of Fire Island



As you can see above, we have a difficult time ahead for our island, and it's only October. Ophelia battered Fire Island's east end more seriously than elsewhere, but island-wide we have great challenges facing us. This report is lengthy, but conditions warrant bringing you up-to-date and offering a look ahead.

Tropical Storm Ophelia inflicted major damage on Fire Island beaches and dunes that were already eroded after Hurricane Lee passed by offshore. With five days of northeast winds and heavy swells over multiple high tide cycles, Ophelia hung around way too long and caused serious trouble. All communities were affected to some degree. Up and down the island, stretches of relatively minor damage alternate with swaths of severe berm and dune loss, sometimes even within the same community. This variation is primarily caused by gaps or 'holes' in the protective sand bar that sits right off shore. During a storm event, large waves typically break out on the bar and lose most of their destructive power. But holes in the bar can form and move along the island with the westward littoral drift, letting powerful waves roll all the way into shore causing 'hot spots' of severe erosion.



Beach and dune conditions are more serious from Robbins Rest and Summer Club all the way to Davis Park. We are circulating this FIA UPDATE to keep our FIA members informed and to let you know about our collaborative efforts with our 17 communities, and Town, County, State and Federal agencies, NYS DEC, USACE, and elected officials to secure emergency repairs for our beaches and dunes.



Here are the current efforts underway to assure we get the beach repairs we urgently need:

West End Repair Scheduled to Begin in November: As many of you know, there is a long-planned beach repair project set to begin this fall on the west end (Kismet to Seaview). The Army Corps authorized this repair in response to Suffolk County's emergency request under the Public Law 84-99 program after a series of vicious nor-easters way back in 2019. (PL 84-99 provides emergency coastal repairs for Army Corps beaches at 100% federal cost.) At that time, the west end was more severely damaged than our communities to the east, so the request was approved only for western Fire Island. (Note: Because there were no funds available for emergency projects at the time it was approved, the repair was delayed and is now scheduled to begin next month).

First Request for East End Repair: When the 2022 Christmas storms chewed up the east end beaches, especially Fire Island Pines, FIA asked Suffolk County to submit a second PL 84-99 application for emergency work for the east end communities (the last four blocks of Seaview all the way to Davis Park). This application was reviewed by NYS DEC and forwarded to USACE to determine whether the storm was powerful enough, and the damage severe enough, to meet the

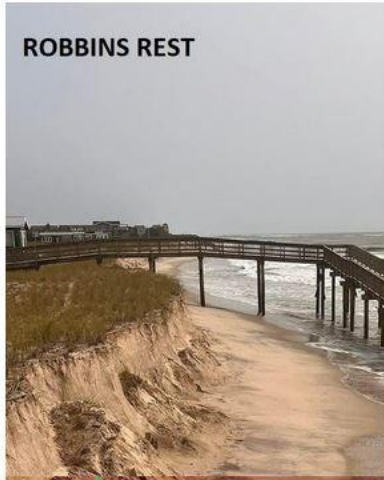
criteria for a repair project. The Corps is currently reviewing that application, with no decision rendered yet.



Second Request for East End Repair Submitted: With Hurricane Lee approaching in early September, the Town of Brookhaven and Suffolk County came out to the island and measured the height and width of our beaches. This data on pre-storm conditions could be used to calculate subsequent erosion that might occur from the storm. When extent of the sand loss from Ophelia became evident this past week, FIA urged Suffolk County to go ahead and submit a second PL 84-99 request for the east end beaches. We deeply appreciate the immediate action by the County, in collaboration with Brookhaven, to complete and submit the necessary paperwork for the application to the DEC (pre-storm data, along with documentation of wind force, height of waves, and storm duration) on October 2nd. The post storm measurements will be conducted and submitted by the County and Town as soon as possible.

Building Support for East End Repair: The FIA is collaborating with our east end communities to alert local, state, and federal agencies that emergency repair is critically important. The hamlets with the most serious damage (Ocean Bay Park, Fire Island Pines and Davis Park) have been leading the charge. Multiple contacts have been made with the Town of Brookhaven, Suffolk County, the New York State DEC, and the Army Corps to press the case for action. Many of our elected officials have also been contacted with requests to advocate on our behalf, and they have responded quickly. After visiting the Pines, Brookhaven Town Supervisor Ed Romaine wrote to the DEC and

the Army Corps urging immediate action. TOB Councilman Neil Foley has been working tirelessly to promote coordination with our community leaders, the Town and County officials. Senator Schumer has written a letter to the Commander of USACE urging approval of eastern FI repair. Senator Gillibrand has advised that she will also write to USACE and express concern.



[Click here](#) to read a recent *New York Post* article focusing on Senator Schumer's push ([Schumer letter](#)) for repair of USACE coastal projects, including the east end of Fire Island. Brookhaven Supervisor Romaine, Councilman Neil Foley, and Deputy Supervisor Dan Panico held a press conference in Davis Park on October 3rd to emphatically underscore the need for USACE action.

Check our website www.fireislandassociation.org from time to time for more *Updates*.

Please consider joining FIA as we work to protect our fragile barrier island, [join us](#).

Sincerely,

Suzy Goldhirsch

FIA President