



HOUSE OF THE WEEK
Real Estate Resource



MORE SAND ON WAY TO CAPE MAY POINT

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City digs in for saltwater intrusion fight

New wells, desalination plant help Cape May turn back tide

INSIDE

— Cape May Point may change allocation, excess-use rates.
— Small changes can lower bills, preserve aquifer.
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By **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — The city of Cape May continues to battle saltwater intrusion into its wells by drilling new wells and using its reverse osmosis desalination plant.

The environmental commissions of Cape May, West Cape May and Lower Township gathered Sept. 27 in the meeting room of the West Cape May Volunteer Fire Company to discuss aquifers

and conserving water.

Cape May completed a reverse osmosis water-treatment facility in 1998 that removes salt from the city's water wells to produce potable drinking water to its customers in the city, Cape May Point, West Cape May and Coast Guard Training Center Cape May.

Chief Water Treatment Plant Operator/Supervisor Carl Behrens said Cape May is in the southern coastal plain formation. He said aquifers here are water-

bearing zones made of very coarse sand or very fine gravel that hold water, not rock formations such as in northern Jersey.

Behrens illustrated the aquifers below the Cape May area starting with the most shallow, the Holly Beach Aquifer, known as groundwater. He said next comes a clay layer 50 to 250 feet thick and below that the Estuarine Sands Aquifer. Below the Estuarine Sands is the Cohansy Aquifer followed by the Rio Grande water-bearing zone, with

the Atlantic City 800 Foot Sands Aquifer beneath it.

He dispelled the myth that when the U.S. government dug the Cape May Canal, "it made all our wells go salty." The canal may be 30 feet below ground level but the clay layer is 80 feet below ground, Behrens said. Saltwater would fall in the Holly Beach Aquifer, he said.

Behrens said water in the aquifers moves about 11 feet per

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FEMA refuses to ease stance on flood zone

Properties on Delaware Bay to stay in high-risk category

By **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

VILLAS — Despite an appeal that included expert testimony, the Federal Emergency Management Agency is continuing to keep homes along the bay in Lower Township in the V zone, resulting in very expensive flood insurance rates for homeowners.

"The way with government sometimes is they give you the one-size-fits-all from Washington," Deputy Mayor Norris Clark said.

He said the township asked FEMA not to treat the bayside areas as if they were located on the Atlantic Ocean.

"They basically said to us, 'We don't acknowledge that.' We are citing a rule based on a federal law that says they have to look at us just like they would be looking at the Atlantic coast," Clark said.

"They ignored all the great scientific arguments our folks from Stockton gave them and we're going to have to keep fighting this because once that FEMA map gets implemented, it's going to have a terrible effect on folks along the bay shore with their insurance and other issues," he continued.

The issue will be brought up at the next meeting of the Delaware Bayshore Council, a coalition of municipalities located along Delaware Bay, Clark said.

The township enlisted the assistance of Stewart Farrell, director and founder of Stockton University's Coastal Research Center. He told a meeting of Cape May Point Borough Commission last week that some homes along the bay front in Lower Township have lost 40 percent of their value

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John Cooke/Special to the STAR AND WAVE

Avocados in autumn

Lucy Corvino of La Doña Restaurante Mexicano in Cape May prepares fresh guacamole for Octoberfest attendees under rainy skies Oct. 1 in Cape May. The restaurant opened this year and offers authentic Mexican food.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Working properly, the floodgate is closed during heavy rain and an outgoing tide Sept. 29. While the floodgate keeps the incoming tide from flooding the area, it also prevents the area from draining when it does flood.

Tidal gate, tides contributing to flooding in West Cape May

By **JACK FICHTER**
Cape May Star and Wave

WEST CAPE MAY — Unusually heavy rain, a functioning tidal gate and a small pipe are contributing to flooding in an area in the borough that formerly was not waterlogged.

At a Sept. 28 Borough Commission meeting, Engineer Ray Roberts, of Remington, Vernick and Walberg, said flooding took place two weeks ago near Wilbraham Park during heavy rain. He said a 60-inch-diameter pipe runs

from Perry Street down to Grant Street in Cape May past homes to the meadows along Sunset Boulevard. A tidal gate at West Perry Street along Cape Island Creek next to the miniature golf course closes when the tide is high, Roberts said.

"So now, nothing flows out of this pipe until the tide goes down," he said. "So every bit of rain that falls in this area goes in through there."

Roberts said when the tidal gate is closed, water begins to back up. Drainage for Wilbraham Park is tied

into the system by a 12-inch pipe, he said.

"So just with heavy rains, that 12-inch pipe doesn't have the capacity to take the water," Roberts said. "Even if it did, it wouldn't go anywhere because it can't get out."

He said the county built a dike in 1987 that holds water back to protect wetlands in the meadows. Roberts said with the heavy rain falling two weeks ago on 425 acres of the meadows, there was nowhere for the 60-inch

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