



Girls basketball wins 10th game this season

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House of the week

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169th YEAR NO. 5 CAPE MAY, N.J. Serving America's National Historic Landmark City WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2023 \$1.00

Borough boosts fines for cutting dune vegetation

Scofflaws face \$2,000 penalty for each violation discovered

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY POINT — Borough Commission approved an ordinance to enhance protection of sand dunes and beach protection structures, increasing fines for the cutting, removal or pruning of vegetation on dunes.

At a Jan. 24 meeting, Mayor Robert Moffatt emphasized that a \$2,000 fine for each separate violation can be levied to any person, firm or partnership that is in violation of any provisions of the ordinance.

"The removal, alteration, pruning or the destruction of any part of the said sand dune, trees or plants located on the sand dune or the snow fence thereon or any beach structure, including but not limited to jetties, groins or bulkheads by any person or persons by means of any machine or other form of mechanical equipment operated by any person or persons

is strictly prohibited, except as completed by agents of the borough of Cape May Point in accordance with conditions of the borough's beach management plan as approved by the state Department of Environmental Protection," states the ordinance.

At a Nov. 22 meeting, borough solicitor John Amenhauser said the fines in the previous ordinance were too low to prevent the practice, done to improve people's views.

"The purpose in going back and revising it is to ensure that we do in fact make the penalties more severe and identify that each article of vegetation that was cut down could represent its own individual fine as opposed to just a blanket penalty for however much is cleared by an individual or entity," he said. "We're working on that now but the purpose in a nutshell is to ensure that it doesn't con-

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Bald eagle numbers continue steady rise throughout the state

TRENTON — The bald eagle population in New Jersey continues to climb, according to the 2022 New Jersey Bald Eagle Project Report developed by the state Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Fish and Wildlife and the Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey, with 250 active nests identified last year.

DEP Commissioner Shawn M. LaTourette said the 250 active nests, meaning the nests produced eggs represent an increase of 28 active nests since 2021. Of those nests, 83 percent were successful and collectively produced 335 offspring. The productivity rate for nests with known outcomes was 1.42 young per nest, which is above the range required to maintain healthy population numbers.

"The continued growth of New Jersey's bald eagle population is an inspiration to all of us and is a direct result of strong environmental protection laws, firm partnerships, innovative scientific techniques — and the dedication of many volunteers who devote much of their time to monitoring and

protecting eagles," LaTourette said. "The efforts of the New Jersey Bald Eagle Project — a partnership among the DEP, Conserve Wildlife Foundation of New Jersey, and volunteer eagle watchers — demonstrate how new technologies, effective coordination, public engagement, and education are at work to protect treasured wildlife species such as the bald eagle."

The 250 active nests confirmed in 2022 represent a more than two-fold increase over the 10-year period beginning in 2013, when 119 active nests were counted. The Delaware Bay region remained the state's eagle stronghold, with roughly half of all nests located in Cumberland and Salem counties and the bayside of Cape May County.

A map of active and territorial bald eagle nests in the state includes Bennett's Crossing in Erma, Higbee Beach, Fishing Creek and Green Creek.

A bald eagle named Oran was resighted in Stone Harbor on Nov. 1 by John Kauterman. The eagle was banded May

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Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is planning a project along Delaware Avenue in Cape May to shore up the road and prevent future erosion. It has been in the works for several years and is finally expected next fall or winter 2024.

Army Corps plans living shoreline

Project would shore up Delaware Avenue, protect it from further erosion

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — Water and sewer lines for the U.S. Coast Guard base are embedded in Delaware Avenue, which is eroding away as it is located along Cape May Harbor.

At a Jan. 25 meeting, the city's Environmental Commission discussed a proposed project from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to shore up the road and create a living shoreline.

Environmental Commission member Gretchen Whitman, who is director of the Nature Center of Cape May, said the concept of a living shoreline dates back to erosion occurring along Delaware Avenue after Superstorm Sandy.

Erosion has been occurring along Delaware Avenue since the 1960s when the Army Corps dumped pieces of concrete known as rip rap along the harbor for shoreline stabilization to protect the road.

"It's not just the road but there is a lot of infrastructure along Delaware Avenue — sewer lines, water lines that service the Coast Guard base," she said.

Delaware Avenue is a county-owned road, Whitman said. The Army Corps has been proposing a project for the past 10 years. She said the original reports stated the project was an emergency remediation.

'It's not just the road but there is a lot of infrastructure along Delaware Avenue — sewer lines, water lines that service the Coast Guard base.'

-Gretchen Whitman, director, Nature Center of Cape May

In 2020, the Nature Center held a stakeholder's meeting for the Army Corps for the proposed project in one of its classrooms. It included participants from the city, county and Corinthian Yacht Club, she said.

Whitman said the Army Corps conducted additional studies last September and have revised the plans on several occasions.

"I reached out to the county engineer, and he said the earliest that something could be happening would be this fall, more likely it would be the winter of 2024," she said.

The Army Corps must work with the county because the work would take place in the right of way of Delaware Avenue, Whitman said.

At a spot where erosion was nearing the road, granite rocks were dumped. She said part of the proposed project is to remove the concrete pieces along the shoreline of

Delaware Avenue, rebuild the edge and in front of new rip rap would be a living shoreline creating habitat.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, living shorelines are a green infrastructure technique using native vegetation alone or in combination with low sills to stabilize the shoreline.

Living shorelines provide a natural alternative to "hard" shoreline stabilization methods such as rip rap or bulkheads, and provide numerous benefits including nutrient pollution remediation, essential fish habitat structure, and buffering of shorelines from waves and storms. Research indicates that living shorelines are more resilient than bulkheads in protecting against the effects of hurricanes.

"One of the concerns I've had as the director at the Nature Center is that we utilize the beach and we also use utilize the waterway to have access," Whitman said.

She said there may not be much beach along the southern side of Delaware Avenue. The Nature Center holds education programs on the narrow stretch of beach.

Whitman said she was hopeful a beach would remain at low tide following the project, which rebuilds a wall and plants salt marsh grasses

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Cape May orders appraisals for land swap

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — City Council is moving forward with plans for a land swap that would allow construction of a police station on part of Lafayette Street Park.

During a special meeting Jan. 25, City Council awarded a contract for appraisals of a property on St. John Street and the Sewell Tract.

J.P. Bainbridge and Associates of Cape May Court House will perform the work at the city-owned property in connection with Cape May's application with the state to divert parkland.

Mayor Zack Mullock said the appraisals would be provided to the

state Green Acres Program. City solicitor Chris Gillin-Schwartz said the city must provide the appraisals as quickly as possible to the state.

The city contacted officials with the Department of Environmental Protection Green Acres Program proposing to dispose of .14 acres of future parkland along St. John Street near the intersection of Lafayette Street. As compensation, the city would dedicate as parkland about 4.86 acres at the Sewell Tract.

In other business, council approved applying to the county Open Space Program to fund renovation of Kiwanis Park. The city is seeking \$1 million from the county.

The city is planning to upgrade

the park for full handicap accessibility including a new play structure and soft surfaces for safety. A Department of Community Affairs grant the city received for handicap accessibility is not intended for just one type of disability but for all abilities and inabilities.

The park would have a handicap-accessible restroom. A new asphalt sideline area would be constructed along the existing basketball courts with benches and a new fence along the pond to keep basketballs out of the water. The park would have low-level bollard lighting along its paths.

In closed session, council continued to interview applicants for the open position of chief financial officer.



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