

We must rebuild wisely

Political will needed to redevelop coastline sensibly

Hurricane Sandy has come and gone, leaving a trail of devastation in her wake. While many New Jersey-ans have experienced the ferocity of coastal storms before, the wrath of Sandy was unprecedented. In many areas, storm surge, flooding and wave damages were more extensive than anything we have encountered in recorded history. The resulting impacts to people and property are heart-wrenching.

For those of us who study coastal processes and the impact of coastal storms in New Jersey, Hurricane Sandy was not surprising. Copious technical data from a range of sources demonstrate that New Jersey is extremely vulnerable to damages from coastal storms and hurricanes.

Historical shoreline maps dating back to the 1850s illustrate the pattern of shoreline dynamics, beach erosion and storm damage that continues today. Studies conducted by the federal Army Corps of Engineers, FEMA and the state Department of Environmental Protection further document the significant level of development and public infrastructure at risk along the coast.

More than 100 years of tide gauge data collected in Atlantic City and Sandy Hook confirm that relative sea level has risen one foot over the past century. The undeniable future of the New Jersey coast is one of rising tides, shifting sands, increasing storm vulnerability and increasing taxpayer liability.

As we move into the post-storm restoration phase, we have a unique

opportunity to seriously re-think our recovery. The scope of damages caused by Hurricane Sandy provides a platform to consider alternatives to putting everything back exactly where it was prior to the storm.

Where should we rebuild? How should we rebuild? What changes to our infrastructure should we consider? What actions must we take to enhance long-term protection of people and property and mitigate the human and financial burdens inflicted by future storm events?

Perhaps most importantly, can we summon the political will to make the difficult decisions necessary to effectuate sensible redevelopment? These are just some of the questions that policy makers and communities need to address right now. But one thing is certain: We cannot ignore lessons learned and repeat past mistakes as we redevelop our coast. We take as we redevelop our coast. We have to be smarter than that.

Some might suggest that federal assistance through the National Flood Insurance Program provides an adequate safety net to offset increased risk. However, with the increasing frequency and intensity of storms and floods, the long-term solvency of the current NFIP structure is uncertain. Katrina and other 2005 hurricanes alone left almost \$19 bil-



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COMMENTARY

ion in debt to the U.S. Treasury). And the financial losses from Sandy may be equally staggering. With an insured exposure of \$1.2 trillion, reliance on this program to hedge against increased risk from unwise redevelopment is simply irresponsible.

The good news is that there are strategies that have proven to be effective in protecting lives and reducing storm damages in New Jersey. Coastal dunes buffer the shoreline from direct impacts of waves and storm surge, provided that we don't limit dune height to enhance ocean views. Development setbacks provide safe distance between structures and the ravages of coastal storms. Construction practices that exceed minimum regulatory requirements allow buildings to withstand storm and flood damages and increase community resilience. We must aggressively implement these and other mitigation techniques as we redevelop the coast to better protect our residents so that natural hazards don't continue to result in natural disasters.

So, as we chart a course for redevelopment along the New Jersey coast, it behooves us to learn from past experience. Time and tides have shaped the coastline for millions of years, and will continue to do so in the future, with little regard for the millions of public dollars we spend each year on beach nourishment and shore protection. This is not conjecture or politics. Rather, it is sound science that reflects a demonstrable and irrefutable historical record. We know that history repeats itself, and we cannot pretend that it won't continue to do so.

The current administration has a rare opportunity to demonstrate, through sensible post-storm rebuilding efforts, that protecting lives and property is a benchmark of good government, as is protecting the taxpayer's pocketbook. The opportunity to rethink our recovery and rebuild wisely provides a chance for real leaders to lead.

Mark Mauriello worked for the state DEP for 30 years, serving as commissioner from October 2008 until January 2010.

Some long waits went unrewarded

Motorists sitting online at the Wawa on Route 66 in Neptune, some for more than an hour, were told by an employee at 4:30 a.m. Friday that a computer that allows them to pump gasoline had locked up, and that the pumps were no longer working.

"You can continue to sit here on line," the spokesman said. "But we just don't know when or if the problem will be solved."

Some motorists continued to sit, while others briskly pulled out of line and raced down Route 66 in hopes of finding another source for fuel.

A half hour later, a Wawa employee said by telephone that the electronic problem was due to low fuel at the station and that the pumps were operational again. That was the good news. He added that the station had less than 100 gallons of gas left and that it would be gone within a few minutes.

Search for new housing sure to be competitive

Days after Hurricane Sandy's storm surge flooded their homes, residents of the Holiday on Bay in Toms River, which is surrounded on three sides by lagoons and water views of Barnegat Bay, returned to their water-logged homes Thursday for the first time since being evacuated.

Too damaged to return, resi-

ple who have nothing," Johnson said.

Pomphery said she made a big sign that she hung on her house. The sign said, "All looters will be reported and shot," she said.

"After we made the sign, the looters are going away," Pomphery said.