



CITY OF HUNTINGTON BEACH

City Council Meeting – Council Member Items Report

To: City Council
From: Gracey Van Der Mark, Council Woman
Don Kennedy, Councilman
Andrew Gruel, Councilman
Date: August 19, 2025
Subject: Advocacy for Ongoing Sand Replenishment

ISSUE STATEMENT

The stretch of coastline between Anaheim Bay Harbor and Newport Bay relies heavily on regular beach sand nourishment projects to combat erosion. Historically, sediment and sand flowed naturally through the San Gabriel and Santa Ana Rivers to replenish the coastline. However, flood control structures built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) between the 1930s and 1950s disrupted this process, preventing natural sand replenishment following winter storms and other erosive events. Recognizing the long-term impacts, Congress passed the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1962, directing the USACE to mitigate the effects of these structures. This led to the first nourishment project (Stage 1) in 1964, which placed 4.3 million cubic yards of sand along Surfside Beach. Since then, thirteen replenishment projects have occurred, typically every 5–7 years, with the most recent (Stage 13) completed in 2024. Future efforts, including a continuation of Stage 14, are planned to maintain coastal protection.

Sand naturally migrates southward from Surfside Beach—near the San Gabriel River—helping replenish the beaches between Anaheim Bay and Newport Bay. However, in some areas along the 12-mile (68,000 linear feet) stretch, erosion has become so severe that homes in Surfside are at risk during winter storms and high tides.

In other sections, public access is compromised during high tides, and vital coastal infrastructure—parking lots, roads, boardwalks, and other structures—faces increasing threats. These risks were highlighted nationally in July 2020, when the Balboa Peninsula in Newport Beach experienced severe saltwater flooding, damaging both public and private property. Notably, this event occurred absent a major storm, signaling a potential new reality if the protective buffer of beach sand continues to decline. In Huntington Beach, Pacific Coast Highway near Sunset Beach and the Bolsa Chica Wetlands, has been closed numerous times during high tides or significant storms.

Beach nourishment projects are essential to preserving the health and resilience of Huntington Beach's coastline. They safeguard both public and private assets, provide storm protection, and help sustain the economic and recreational value of the region. Without consistent sand replenishment, the coastline will continue to erode, leaving communities and infrastructure increasingly vulnerable.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Direct the City Manager to provide a presentation on sand replenishment at an upcoming Study Session. The presentation should include how the City can advocate at the local, state, and

federal levels for support of continuous permitting and funding cycles while collaborating with local coastal agencies.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

This action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, because it has not potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

Goal 6 - Infrastructure Investment, Strategy A - Provide world-class beach facilities, including the renovation and expansion of 15 beach restrooms, new lighting improvements for Pier Plaza access, security and programming.