

## Different ideas for controlling erosion of Pacifica's coast floated at workshop

Terms such as "managed retreat" and "beach nourishment" became talking points last Wednesday at a workshop attended by Pacificans and residents of neighboring communities who came out to express their opinions about how to manage erosion problems on the coast.

A study organized by the Estuary Partnership in conjunction with the Association of Bay Area Governments is being done to see how coastal erosion can be controlled. Pacifica is part of the so-called San Francisco Littoral Cell study, which focuses on the stretch of coast from here all the way up to San Francisco.

The idea is to plan for sediment management over the next 50 years, taking into account current conditions as well as projected sea level rise and extraordinary events such as a 100-year storm.

Bob Battalio, principal engineer on the study, examined Pacifica's problem spots, including the seawall at Sharp Park that abuts the golf course. He explained how, in years past, that section of Sharp Park beach was wider before the seawall was constructed.

"Are we going to armor our shores and lose beaches?" he asked, showing a cartoon drawing of a sad child forced to walk on rocks instead of sand.

Battalio said the best approach for that section would be a managed retreat, in which the seawall is allowed to fail so the beach eventually can restore itself. Linda Mar Beach is a perfect example of a managed retreat because some structures were removed there, enabling the

beach to widen.

Bill McGlochlin, a member of the Surfrider Foundation, said the group would support any plan that protects the beaches as much as possible.

Ideas offered included beach nourishment, which involves trucking large quantities of sand that is redeposited out at sea. It has the effect of reducing the wave action on shore.

Before the evening public workshop, staffs of cities throughout the Bay Area met to exchange some of their own possible solutions.

Lee Diaz, associate planner for Pacifica, reported on a work-in-progress idea to manage the city's erosion through a combination of managed retreat, beach nourishment and armoring. The plans are in the preliminary stage and do not represent the city's official position, Diaz said, adding that there is no talk about moving the pump stations on Linda Mar Beach because it would be too costly.

Among the 40 or so people who packed the card room at the Community Center for the workshop, some were members of the Pacifica Chamber of Commerce who had come out to protest any erosion control measures that would cause the loss of businesses or residences in Pacifica.

Most of Pacifica's coast is armored and many who spoke would like to keep it that way. Preserving economic opportunities, tourism and businesses in the region is important and should play into any future management plan, they said.

Richard Harris, a San Francisco resident, said he favors maintaining the Sharp Park Golf Course and worries that a managed retreat approach would wipe it out.

"The cost to replace the golf course is too high," he said. "Consider beach nourishment. Build up the levee. I have a concern that the golf course will not be maintained under this plan."

Pacifican Mark Stechbart, who attended the meeting on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce's governmental affairs committee, said he believes Battalio, as the project engineer, has a conflict of interest because last year he prepared a consultant's report on behalf of Wild Equity, an organization that concluded the Sharp Park seawall should be allowed to degrade and the area reverted to an open wetland space.

"I do not understand how Battalio can be an advocate one day and within maybe weeks become neutral on the littoral project," Stechbart said.

Chamber board member Jim Wagner advocated maintaining the Sharp Park Golf Course for its historic value.

"I find it odd that the golf course should be managed through managed retreat and that other places should have armoring," he said.

Local business owner Chuck Gust asked if what was done in Arcata to subdue wave action and prevent erosion would work here. Doug George, technical lead on the project, said it would. Gust noted that past advice given to local farmers to create sediment ponds was bad because that sediment would have been better used on the beach.

"There's a lot more art than science here," said Eric Ruchames, another local resident. "I'm concerned because the economic study will not be broad enough. There are dozens of people who live in managed retreat areas who wouldn't be able to live there anymore. If this study does not help us with a funding source, it is just a waste of time."

The study was launched because erosion studies from 1998-99 were not holistic enough in their approach to the whole area, George said; it seeks to develop a plan suitable for the whole area.

The next step will be to draft that plan in the next couple months and return to the public for review.