

Sargent's granite wall may be key to America's economic future

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Willie Younger A Natural State of Mind | 0 comments

In the mid 1980s, Sargent residents began loudly voicing their deep concerns over the monumental loss of shoreline along about an eight mile stretch of their nearby beach. In fact, the average loss along this part of the Texas coast was reported, by University of Texas Bureau Of Economic Geology researchers, to be the worst large-scale case of oceanfront erosion found in entire the US, its territories and commonwealths. When row, upon row of beachfront homes began being devoured by the sea, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers verified that +/- 34 feet per year was vanishing along 7.5 vulnerable miles of Gulf shoreline, with isolated hot spots losing over 60 feet annually.

Many locals were aware of government-sponsored beach restoration and maintenance projects in coastal communities along the Gulf and Atlantic seaboard. Most often, it was Miami Beach they cited as the definitive beach nourishment success story.



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Thus, these disturbed citizens started persistently asking the County Commissioners Court to step in and formally ask state and federal authorities to conserve and, if possible, rebuild the beach. They viewed this as necessary for protecting both their property and /or their property values and for preserving the beach as a prominent tourism development asset. The panacea routinely envisioned was to allocate federal dollars and authorize Army engineers to dredge sand offshore and then pump it onto the beach and, thereby, pleasingly broaden and thicken Sargent Beach with a glittery and gritty veneer to cover exposed clay.

Unfortunately, there were several formidable obstacles standing in the way of this proposed strategy. Therefore, the prospects of incorporating this remedy looked very, very bleak.

First, was the fact that, at that time, Sargent was a relatively small, unincorporated coastal community primarily comprised of comparatively modest second homes. This reality suggested to the powers that be that there was not a sense of, either economic or political, urgency to care for this remote, end-of-the-road vacation spot at FM 457's terminus.

Second, was the plethora of reports from coastal geologists, and geo-morphologists, that there was no appreciable reserve of sand lying just offshore of Sargent Beach from which to replenish the shore. This meant

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