

TIGHT LINES BULLETIN

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE WEST PALM BEACH FISHING CLUB

IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK....

STORIES ABOUT SOME OF THE MAGNIFICENT MOUNTS INSIDE THE WPBFC

BOOM! The shotgun blast sent a bird shot ricocheting off the linoleum floor taking **Bob Kleiser**, **Jimmy Darr** and the offending triggerman by complete surprise. The deafening discharge occurred over 50 years ago inside Bob Kleiser's Sport Shop located on Datura Street in downtown West Palm Beach (where Gratify restaurant is located today). Fortunately nobody was hurt. Unfortunately, a 418 pound blue marlin, the focal point of an elaborate fish mural, wasn't so lucky. The wayward shot peppered the eleven-foot long skin mount like a plugged pheasant flushed from the scrub. Needless to say proprietor Bob Kleiser, who caught the behemoth off Bimini in 1937, was not happy. Today, that marlin hangs from the rafters inside the West Palm Beach Fishing Club. If you look closely you can see streaks of fish oil that has oozed from where some of the shot found purchase. This fish tale is just one of countless stories behind the trophy mounts that adorn the walls of the Fishing Club. Almost every fish in our clubhouse has a story to tell. Here are some of them.



The fat kingfish that hangs over the Fishing Club's south door has a unique background. On June 19, 1969, **Ann Kunkel's** intended target was giant bluefin tuna, not king mackerel. 'Bluefin Annie' was a renowned tuna angler. She and **Captain Jack Lance** were trolling the Great Bahama Bank during the annual Cat Cay Tuna

Tournament when their rigged Spanish mackerel yielded a monster mackerel instead of tuna. The fish was a woman's world record, tipping the scales at 71 pounds. As luck would have it, IGFA president **Elwood K. Harry** happened to be the tournament weigh master, which no doubt helped authenticate and expedite Annie's entry into the record book. Ann Kunkel was a very supportive and longtime WPBFC member. She donated



the big king and many other unique mounts to the Fishing Club prior to her death years ago.

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Piers Could Curb Beach Erosion

by Tom Twyford, WPBFC President

Like many coastal residents of Palm Beach County I am frustrated with how our beach erosion problem is managed. I am dissatisfied with the repeated practice of dredging sand offshore and dumping it on our beaches, a temporary solution at best that has cost taxpayers hundreds of millions dollars over the past decades. The marine environment has paid an equally high price. Estuarine habitat, as well as near shore and offshore reefs have been impacted. Ever wonder why all that sand has built up inside the Loxahatchee River smothering seagrass and oyster beds? Or why the boat channel off Sailfish Marina continues to narrow and shallow up? Or why the water off some 'nourished' beaches remains turbid for days after strong winds? Logic leads me to believe that years of dredge and fill projects along our coast are in large part to blame.

An often-divisive debate over 'beach nourishment' reignites *continued on page 36*

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each fall when seasonal storms move and redistribute sand along our coastline, leaving some sections of beach eroded. This of course sends oceanfront residents and tourism officials into a panic. Comments from fishermen, surfers, and county taxpayers in general, are often pitted against the sometimes very differing views of coastal property owners. Yet, we all want the same thing: healthy beaches. With federal dollars for beach nourishment projects drying up, the county, coastal municipalities and inlet taxing districts are all scrambling for money and solutions. Additionally, sources of sand with the proper grain size, and minimal silt and clay content are becoming harder to find. In fact, Broward and Miami-Dade Counties have exhausted most of their supply of suitable sand off their coasts. They have begun tapping into the supply of offshore sand off Palm Beach County and the Bahamas, at significant expense. Even though Palm Beach County has an estimated 50+ year supply of suitable sand off its coast, it is clear to me that the frequency and sheer volume of material required for these projects is unsustainable, both economically and environmentally.



The indented south side of Lake Worth Inlet and the accumulation of sand inside the lagoon off Sailfish Marina are easily visible in this Google Earth image. Commercial inlets like this one must be periodically dredged to maintain safe navigation, however maintaining the inlet disrupts littoral drift.

It is time to embrace more cost effective and lasting approaches to this dynamic problem, rather than keep throwing money at the same old methodology. The buildup and erosion of our beaches is a recurring natural event that has been exacerbated by human development. As long as we maintain navigable inlets we will always have beach erosion issues. Dredged inlets interfere with the natural movement of sand, primarily from north to south along our coast. This natural process is called littoral drift, and it can be impeded by structures in the water. That's why surfers find some of the best wave breaks near sand bars created by jetties and piers. It also explains why the beach on the north side of every Palm Beach County inlet extends further east than the more eroded south side (see photo above). It is no coincidence that the island of Palm Beach had far less beach erosion sixty years ago when iron groins were spaced perpendicularly along the shoreline. Over time the groins deteriorated and most were eventually removed, but they worked.

Here's a functional, albeit somewhat novel, approach to keeping more sand on some of our beaches. I suggest Palm Beach County invest some of its beach nourishment dollars in the construction of new fishing piers instead of cutting huge checks to dredge and fill operators. Specifically, build ocean fishing piers at Carlin Park south of Jupiter Inlet and at Ocean Reef Park on Singer Island, both county parks with existing public use infrastructure. Engineered properly, and perhaps used in conjunction with strategically placed groins, the piers could effectively help retain sand in these two areas where erosion problems are so persistent. Perhaps there are other suitable sites as well.

In 1999, after tremendous public debate and scrutiny by permitting agencies the county received approval by the Governor and cabinet to build the new Juno Pier. The construction cost was approximately three million dollars, a minimal expenditure when you compare it to what has been spent on past beach nourishment projects. Rebuilding the Juno Pier has proved to be a very successful investment for Palm Beach County. It is a facility that is enjoyed by

anglers, surfers, local residents and visitors alike. Sixty years ago Palm Beach County supported three ocean fishing piers at a time when the county population was just a fraction of what it is today. The iconic Juno Pier has become a huge asset to the town of Juno Beach and is a popular tourist attraction. Beach erosion thus far has not been an issue near the Juno Pier.

The Juno Pier was not intended to accrete sand. The original design placed the pier bait shack and admission building on the upland so that all the pier's pilings could be spaced at 30-foot intervals allowing for the uninhibited flow of sand beneath the structure. However, the permitting agencies insisted on a design change that moved the bait shack over the water requiring a tighter aggregation of pilings to support the building. This was done because the permitting agencies indicated that the sex of turtle hatchlings in nests shaded by the building could be artificially altered (the



Palm Beach Post photographer Greg Lovett took this picture (left) the day the new Juno Pier opened in 1999. Note the position of the bait shack to the water. By comparison, look how much sand has accreted below and to the east of the bait shack in the photo below, taken October of 2011.



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temperature of sand around turtle eggs influences the sex of the animal). As a result, the bait shack was moved over the water and the cluster of pilings beneath it has accreted sand (see photos). The point of all this is that here is a structure that by design provides valuable recreational opportunities to the public and is helping hold sand at Juno Beach. The pier's impact on sea turtle's has been negligible.

Let me be clear, building piers is by no means a panacea. Nor am I trying to oversimplify a very complex problem. I recognize that maintenance dredging at inlets, and emergency nourishment at heavily eroded beaches after significant storm events from time to time will be required. However, our addiction to status quo nourishment needs to end. We need to think outside the box. Fishing piers, along with other structures like groins, are just a few alternative approaches to dredge and fill projects. One enterprising individual has even proposed employing movable groins made from barges that can be floated to erosion hot spots and then sunk perpendicular to the beach to accrete sand. The structures could be re-floated and moved, or adjusted, if they were not performing as expected, or if they were causing serious impacts to turtles or other resources. Furthermore, these barges could be designed to look like natural shoreline outcroppings with rock and possibly vegetation added to the exposed portion of the barge. Innovative alternatives like these have been proposed in the past only to be stymied by political bickering, the uncom-

promising views of special interest groups, dredge company lobbyists, 'not in my backyard' attitudes and overzealous regulators too focused on minimal or potential impacts, rather than acknowledging the big picture and long term benefits. We are running out of time and options. What benefit to the public and the environment will there be if our beaches continue to erode and we don't give new approaches a chance?

A recent proposal by the county to construct emergent rock piles off Singer Island was defeated earlier this year, in part because of potential impacts on sea turtles. As a result, some Singer Island condominiums are considering building massive seawalls along their portion of the beach. A few already exist. Continued armoring of the beach with seawalls will eventually lead to little or no beach at all for turtles to nest. Ironically, the permitting agencies that denied the experimental rock piles off Singer Island in the name of turtle protection are the same agencies that, years ago, permitted the construction of buildings far too close to the ocean, destroying the protective qualities the dune provides for the beach and nesting turtles. This cycle of bureaucratic ineffectiveness must end.

It's time to search for more practical solutions to Palm Beach County's beach erosion problem. Let's quit wasting millions of dollars on an expensive and environmentally irresponsible process that we have little to show for and invest in solutions that are more sustainable. Building a few new fishing piers is a start...what do we have to lose?



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