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CITY OF TYBEE ISLAND

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TYBEE ISLAND NAMED ONE OF AMERICA'S BEST RESTORED BEACHES

TYBEE ISLAND, GA – After spending three years and nearly \$18 million nourishing its fragile coastal environment, Tybee Island is honored to be among the select few winners of the 2020 Best Restored Beach award. The award has been bestowed on five US beaches this year by the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) in its much-anticipated list of the nation's best restored beaches.

The other 2020 winners are:

- Cardiff State Beach, California
- South Benson, Connecticut
- Keansburg, New Jersey
- Norriego Point, Florida
- Tybee Island, Georgia

Judging was based on three criteria: economic and ecological benefits the beach brings to its community; success of the restoration project; and challenges each community overcame during the course of the project.

In awarding Best Restored Beach, the ASBPA looked for innovative solutions to unique problems, recognizing that every beach has its own challenges and opportunities that can be addressed and augmented by a well-executed restoration project. Tybee Island improved its resiliency to flooding events while at the same time enhancing the natural habitat of the island, including federally protected sea turtle nesting sites and endangered bird species, both of which are vital to the city's environmental and economic health.

Approximately 1.3 million cubic yards of sand was placed along 15,000 feet of shoreline, including 70,000 cubic yards for dune construction. The total cost of the restoration when completed is estimated to be over \$17 million.

In 2016 Tybee adopted its Sea Level Rise Adaptation Study, which was funded by National Sea Grant. "The Study made several recommendations which we have implemented, including for the first time augmenting our beach nourishment with dune restoration", said Mayor Shirley Sessions. The beach nourishment project was undertaken by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers late last year as part of a supplemental federal funding to address damage done by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

“We thank Representative Buddy Carter and Senator Johnny Isakson for their active support of that federal funding”, said Mayor Sessions. “We are also fortunate to be the recipient of a Department of Community Affairs OneGeorgia Grant that funded our dune improvements. That grant was vital to our ability to take advantage of the Corps' beach nourishment and execute as quickly as we did.”

“We believe our approach to this project, particularly our dune restoration, was innovative in the use of stabilized dunes to provide protection as well as vehicular access to the beach”, said Shawn Gillen, City Manager. “We also innovated in adapting existing technology like traffic barriers to storm surge protection, which had not been tried before, and in storing sand on-site for use in emergencies. We also have started constructing our pedestrian dune crossovers on the seaward side and working landward, so we can continue to work past the start of turtle season.”

“Our experience of the past three hurricane seasons suggests we can expect an increase in the number of storms and sunny day flooding.” Mr. Gillen said. “Becoming more resilient means continued maintenance of our beach, dunes, and marsh, which improves our ability to absorb the effects of a storm event and recover more quickly. We adapt our plans to the changing environment.”

The benefits of building and maintaining Tybee’s coastal resilience are many. As climate changes trigger higher sea levels and stronger storm events, a wide beach and large dunes remain the best protection from encroaching seas and storm-driven waves. Our beach and dunes provide residents and visitors with improved recreation opportunities, which underpins Tybee’s economic growth. At the same time, Tybee is a federally protected sea turtle nesting site, and migrating shorebirds rely on its wide healthy beach as a place to live, feed, rest and nest.

“Tybee's effort to enhance its dune system could be considered a model for other coastal communities”, said Deb Barreiro, Coastal Permit Coordinator with of Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). “The City's goal to build resilience through green infrastructure was accomplished by working with their project manager, Alan Robertson of AWR Strategic Consulting, to propose a project that was permissible and met Tybee's goals and objectives. Alan invited us into the conversation well before filing permits on behalf of the City. I think that helped him effectively manage the intricacies of very a complex project so that there were no major surprises. We navigated the process together.”

“Our work began three years ago, when Jason Buelterman was Mayor”, said Mayor Sessions. “While I am very proud of what we have accomplished and I am committed to continuing to improve Tybee’s coastal resilience, Jason should be credited with leading this initiative from the beginning. “

“I went on a fact-finding trip to New Jersey after Sandy and saw firsthand how sand dunes protected a community up there, said Jason Beulterman. “Thanks to State Representative Petrea and Senator Watson, we were able to fully fund the dune project. I am so thankful that Shirley and her team not only finished this critically important project but are planning even more important work to protect Tybee in the future”.

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