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MAYOR

# City of Virginia Beach

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December 11, 2012

The Honorable Robert F. McDonnell  
Office of the Governor  
Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor  
1111 East Broad Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

**Subject: Mining Sand for Beach Replenishment along the Chesapeake Bay Beaches**

Dear Governor McDonnell:

The City Council has included an item in its legislative agenda for the 2013 session regarding the mining of sand for beach replenishment along the Chesapeake Bay beaches. I know you are very familiar with this area, especially the severe erosion and loss of property that has taken place due to severe nor'easters and most recently, Hurricane Sandy. The City has been performing nourishment of portions of our Bay beaches utilizing the Lynnhaven Inlet dredged material provided by the Corps of Engineer navigation maintenance projects. Unfortunately, these small sand replenishment efforts occur every third year and, in no way, provide sufficient storm protection for adjacent properties. The most efficient, practical method of creating a Chesapeake Bay Beach Storm Protection Program is by mining sand from nearby sources in the Chesapeake Bay and directly pumping it onto our beaches using a hydraulic dredging process.

We on the Virginia Beach City Council recognizing the importance of creating a long term storm solution for our Bay front communities, appropriated funds for the purpose of conducting a study to determine if there was an engineering solution available by mining sand within the Chesapeake Bay. We are pleased to report that VIMS (Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences) performed the study for us, and determined that there are ample sources of sand available just short distances from the shoreline. Establishing a replenishment program would provide significant protection to the residential and commercial Bay front beach properties. A copy of the VIMS findings are posted on our City website, VBgov.com, for public review.

Obtaining the environmental permits for mining sand in the Chesapeake Bay has never been requested by the City of Virginia Beach, nor to our knowledge, by our sister city of Norfolk. It is our intent, however, to continue developing a long term storm protection program involving the widening of our Bay front beaches in order to reduce the intensity of storm surge and wave action

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impacts to our beaches and dune system. We acknowledge this new program will require permit approvals from at least two state agencies and a consolidated federal permit issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The City of Virginia Beach has tremendous working partnerships with the Virginia Marine Resources Commission (VMRC), Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. It is our respectful request that you encourage the state agencies to prioritize streamlining this emerging process for sand mining permits and work collaboratively in establishing the necessary framework for developing an approval process. Rest assured we do not wish to avoid any environmental regulatory compliance issues; however, we recognize state agencies will be challenged to work through the details of creating a new solution for protecting life, property and the economic well-being of our municipalities adjacent to the Chesapeake Bay.

Our request is simply that your administration and subsequently the General Assembly favorably support pursuing the creation of a Bay Front Storm Protection Program which incorporates the replenishment of sand through mining of deposits within the Chesapeake Bay.

The damages along our Chesapeake Bay beaches caused by Hurricane Sandy underscore the critical nature of our request. The City staff has briefed our General Assembly delegation and, along with our community leaders, are available to sponsor a tour of our Bay front beaches so you and your staff can get a first-hand view of our needs and discuss our engineering solutions for enhancing the protection of what we feel is a critical asset to our economy and our quality of life. As always, I am certainly available to talk with you about this new initiative at a time convenient to you. Thank you as always for your great leadership of our Commonwealth.

Most Sincerely,



William D. Sessoms, Jr.  
Mayor

WDS/DLH/s

c: The Honorable Scott Rigell, United States House of Representatives  
The Honorable Members of the Virginia Beach General Assembly Delegation  
The Honorable Paul Fraim, Mayor of the City of Norfolk  
The Honorable Members of the Virginia Beach City Council  
James K. Spore, City Manager  
Mark Stiles, City Attorney  
Dave Hansen, Deputy City Manager  
Robert Matthias, Assistant to the City Manager  
Phil Davenport, Interim Director, Public Works  
Kal Kassir, Chairman, Bayfront Advisory Committee