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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 is bestowed on six US beaches each 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

Judging was based on three criteria: economic and ecological benefits the beach brings to its community; success of the restoration project; 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 is considered one of America's Best Restored Beaches because it 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.

Over the past three years, Tybee has worked to restore its beach and dunes. The beach nourishment was undertaken by the US Army Corps of Engineers late last year as part of supplemental federal funding to address the damage done by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. For the first time, the City constructed and restored dunes as an integral part of the beach nourishment.

"We are very fortunate to be the recipient of a Department of Community Affairs OneGeorgia Grant that funded our beach and dunes improvements, said Shirley Sessions, Mayor of Tybee Island. "Without this vital support we would not be in a position to take advantage of the Corps' beach nourishment."

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.

“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, adapting existing technology (traffic barriers) to storm surge protection, storing sand on-site for use in emergencies, and starting pedestrian crossovers on the seaward side and working landward so we can continue to work past the start of turtle season,” said Shawn Gillen, City Manager of Tybee Island.

“We understand that the experience of the past three hurricane seasons suggest we can expect increased incidents of storms and sunny day flooding as tides rise,” Mr. Gillen said. “Becoming more resilient means planning for continued maintenance of our beach, dunes, and marsh, improving our ability to absorb the effects of a storm event and recover more quickly, and then continuing to adapt to the changing environment.”

The benefits of building and maintaining Tybee’s coastal resilience are many.

As climate changes trigger both higher sea levels and stronger storm events, a wide beach and large dunes remain the best protection from encroaching seas and storm-driven waves. 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. A nourished beach, along with restored dunes, provides residents and visitors alike with improved recreation opportunities, which underpins Tybee’s economic growth.

“The work Tybee is doing to maintain and improve its beach and dunes is becoming a standard for other Georgia coastal communities”, said Deb Barreiro, Coastal Permit Coordinator for the Georgia Department of Natural Resources (DNR). “They are an example of what can be achieved through a partnership between the DNR and a coastal community using innovative approaches to building resilience through green infrastructure. We have developed a close working relationship with Tybee. They invite us into their planning process well before coming to us for regulatory permits so there are no surprises and we understand why they require permitting. The single critical factor to that trusting relationship is, without a doubt, their project manager Alan Robertson of AWR Strategic Consulting, and the way in which he has effectively managed the intricacies of such a complex project.”

“Our work began three years ago, when Jason Buelterman was Mayor. 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 He encouraged the initial assessment and plan by the Beach Task Force. He sought out sources of funding that resulted in our OneGeorgia grant. And he identified and supported Alan Robertson of AWR Strategic Consulting as project manager. Without those three key elements, we would not have been in a position to execute as quickly nor as well as we did,” Ms. Barreiro said.

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