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Lee Commissioners award \$39.2 million contract to nourish Lovers Key and Bonita Beach shoreline

Commissioners also award a design and permitting contract to restore Bonita Beach Park and accesses

Fort Myers, FL, Sept. 17, 2024 – The Lee Board of County Commissioners voted Tuesday to award a nearly \$39.2 contract to nourish beaches on Lovers Key and Bonita Beach to address chronic erosion as well as damage caused by Hurricane Ian in September 2022.

The main project consists of 1.1 miles of shoreline within Lovers Key State Park and 0.8 miles of shoreline at the northern end of Bonita Beach (Little Hickory Island). In addition, in cooperation with the City of Bonita Springs, hurricane damage to the upper beach and dunes will be repaired on a one-time basis extended south on Bonita Beach to the Lee-Collier County line. Weeks Marine Inc. will excavate, transport and place beach-compatible sand from a Gulf of Mexico sand source to nourish multiple beach segments.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has designated the main project area as critically eroded. The Lovers Key segment will be completed using funds from Lee County's Tourist Development Tax – a tax on short-term lodging – funding from FDEP, and Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Disaster Relief Fund. The Bonita Beach segment will include funding from the Tourist Development Tax, FDEP, FEMA, and City of Bonita Springs. A south Bonita Beach segment will be solely funded by FDEP through the City of Bonita Springs.

The funding sources are:

- FDEP – \$23.6 million
- Lee County – \$7.7 million
- City of Bonita Springs – \$5.8 million
- FEMA – \$2 million

The project is scheduled to begin Oct. 15, and will be complete by mid-June 2025. Beaches will remain open, except in the safety zones where sand is actively being placed.

In related business, the Board of County Commissioners voted to:

- Adopt a resolution supporting an application for additional grant funding from FDEP. The grant funding will be used to reimburse expenses for beach nourishment and inlet management projects including Bonita Beach Nourishment, Bonita Beach Groin Repair, and Lover's Key Nourishment projects.
- Awarded a \$571,100 contract to Weston & Sampson Engineers, Inc. to provide design, permitting, and construction administration services to restore Bonita Beach Park, Bonita Beach Access 1, and Little Hickory Island Beach Park.

The project includes restoring three public beach access points along Bonita Beach, which sustained significant structural damage from Hurricane Ian. The affected structures include the restroom and county office building at Bonita Beach Park, two restroom buildings at Little Hickory Island Beach Park, and the wooden boardwalks and pavilions at all three parks. The restroom buildings at Little Hickory Island Beach Park will be replaced, while the Bonita Beach Park restrooms and county office building will be repaired.

This project will be funded through FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund.

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