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Collier sand trucks to hit road Monday

Written by
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Oniel Gardner, a geologist with Stewart Mining Industries in Immokalee, takes a test sample from a pile of beach sand at the mine in Immokalee. / Andrew West/the News-Press

The Collier County beach nourishment project will get underway Monday as the first trucks are set to hit Corkscrew Road.

Collier issued its final notice to proceed Thursday, and the first of thousands of truck trips will leave Stewart Mining Industries for the eroded beaches next week. Collier and Lee counties managers and staff spoke by phone for 35 to 40 minutes Thursday and discussed ways to address traffic and safety concerns raised by Lee leaders.

“We are still optimistic the two counties can work out some kind of compromise that includes twice-daily periods in which trucks will not be on the Corkscrew corridor at times when children and school buses are present,” Lee County Manager Roger Desjarlais said in a statement.

Late last month, Lee County leaders expressed concern that Collier planned to send the roughly 360 to 400 trucks per day down Corkscrew Road. They cited safety, traffic and economic concerns as their basis and requested that Collier County send the trucks down Collier County roads, or use Alico Road, which has fewer residential properties along it.

Collier officials stated that detouring down Alico could add close to \$700,000 to the project.

Collier agreed to look into diverting the trucks to Alico Road during unspecified periods. The county will explore the additional costs this would add to the project and Lee leaders expect a written proposal when that review is complete, according to county spokeswoman Betsy Clayton.

Collier staff also indicated they would support more traffic patrols in the area and were willing to consider covering the added expense, Clayton said.

Pelican Bay

Also, Thursday, the state Department of Environmental Protection referred a petition on an additional project permit to the Department of Administrative Hearings. Naples residents Jan and Bob Krasowski filed the petition to protest starting the beach nourishment project during turtle nesting season.

The permit in question affects the Pelican Bay portion of the project.

An administrative misstep left the community off the original permit modification. Administrative hearings typically take place within three months of the filing, but Pelican Bay remains stalled until the hearing is resolved, according to Dee Ann Miller, a spokeswoman at the DEP. A hearing date is not scheduled.

Truck haul

The Collier County commission approved the truck haul method in September after months of wrangling. In the past, beaches have been restored using an offshore hydraulic dredge. High demand along the east and Gulf coasts made that option too expensive. Collier leaders hired two contractors to use trucks to patch Naples, Park Shore, Pelican Bay and Vanderbilt beaches.

The \$9.5 million project calls for between 360 and 400 trucks per day to travel from Stewart Mining Industries Inc. in northwest Collier County, along Corkscrew Road and down Interstate 75 to one of four drop zones along the Collier coastline. The roughly 250,000 cubic yards of sand should restore the eroded beaches for two to three years.

The work will continue through mid-February. Eastman Aggregate of Lake Worth will begin work Monday bringing sand to Vanderbilt Beach, and Phillips and Jordan of Zephyrhills is expected to join Wednesday, bringing sand to Naples and Park Shore.

