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## Court hearing to delay Pelican Bay portion of controversial beach renourishment project

By ERIC STAATS

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Plans to widen Pelican Bay's beaches are on hold while an environmental permit challenge begins to wend its way toward a hearing.

The Pelican Bay project had been added to Collier County's [larger \\$9.5 million beach renourishment project](#) that has triggered a series of protests over everything from its effect on nesting sea turtles to plans to use Lee County roads to truck the sand from an Immokalee mine.

[Lee County and Collier County officials tried to hash out a compromise](#) on the truck route Thursday but nothing was settled with [just days until trucks are scheduled to roll Monday](#).

Some 400 trucks a day are expected to use State Road 82 and Corkscrew Road in Lee County to get to Interstate 75 and then head south to Collier County and sand dumping spots at Third Avenue North, Lowdermilk Park, Horizon Way and Vanderbilt Beach Road beach accesses.

None of that sand will end up on Pelican Bay's beach, at least for now.

The state Department of Environmental Protection on Thursday referred a Naples couple's challenge to the Pelican Bay project to an administrative law judge for a hearing. The hearing might not convene for three months.

Environmental advocates Bob Krasowski and his wife, Jan, objected to the DEP permit that allowed Pelican Bay to use the public Vanderbilt Beach Road access point and allowed the work to be done before sea turtle nesting season ends Oct. 31.

"We're happy to have the opportunity to bring our concerns, even though it's this little slice (of the larger project) in front of an independent judge," Bob Krasowski said Thursday.

The Krasowskis filed several similar permit challenges to other parts of the Collier County project, but the DEP dismissed all of them, paving the way for the larger project to begin next week.

An administrative hearing means Pelican Bay will have to wait longer to get sand, and heavy equipment will be running up and down the beach in front of the luxury resort Ritz-Carlton, Naples, deeper into the busy tourist season.

"It's really unfortunate that his (the Krasowskis') opposition and his attack on this is potentially going to hurt Pelican Bay," Pelican Bay Foundation President Jim Hoppensteadt said.

The Pelican Bay project, which is to be paid for by Pelican Bay residents instead of by the countywide tourist tax, will add sand generally from south of the Ritz to south of the community's private Sandpiper beach club.

The Krasowskis' challenge isn't the only possible roadblock for the Collier County project.

Lee County has asked the DEP for more time to decide whether to file its own challenge to the project. The challenge period has run out, but Lee says it didn't get proper notice of the DEP permit and that it has "serious concerns" about the environmental effect of the project.

In Thursday's teleconference, Collier officials indicated a willingness to divert traffic from Corkscrew Road to Alico Road but the times have yet to be determined, according to a statement for Lee County Manager Roger Desjarlais.

Collier officials also said they were willing to consider paying for increased Lee County Sheriff's Office traffic patrols along the truck route, according to Desjarlais' statement.

The statement said Lee County still is considering legal options while it awaits a proposal from Collier but that Lee is optimistic the two counties can work out a deal that includes diverting trucks twice a day when children and school buses are present.

Collier County spokeswoman Connie Deane said officials explored options to handle congested periods of traffic and that Collier is waiting for some additional information from Lee County.

[Watch "Naples Daily NewsMakers with Jeff Lytle" at 10 a.m. Sunday on ABC7 for an interview with Lee County Board of Commissioners Chairman Cecil Pendergrass. The video will be available at \*naplesnews.com/newsmakers\* on Monday.](#)