

Beach Erosion Update

6-24-24

The beach is showing severe erosion at the traditional points of the island following the recent period of sustained strong northeasterly winds.



Picture taken June 8, 2024, courtesy AWR Strategic Consulting

In particular, the crosswalk at 2nd Street, among others is at risk during high tide:



Picture taken June 23, 2024, courtesy AWR Strategic Consulting

Since the beach and dunes were nourished in 2019, the City has been monitoring the erosion in partnership with UGA Skidaway Institute of Oceanography (SKIO). Since March of 2020, SKIO has flown a drone quarterly and after major storms, to capture the erosion and accretion patterns along the full length of the beach, and since June 2023 the length of the beach along the Savannah River Channel.

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The latest survey results were presented at a Council Workshop on April 3, 2024. Over the past four years, the dunes have accreted more than 28,000 cubic yards (+4%) and the beach has eroded more than 147,500 cubic yards (-22%), mostly from the North Groin to the Pier, although there has been accretion on the south end and on the north end of the island. Erosion and accretion are not evenly distributed even under normal conditions. Hurricane Ian, in 2022, showed that a single event can remove about a normal year's erosion.

The City began working with the Savannah District US Army Corps of Engineers Savannah District earlier this year to design and plan the next full nourishment, expected in two years, December 2026. The Corps' planning cycle is such that this is the earliest the beach nourishment can be done. While certain access points (i.e. 2nd Street) will lose beach, the full length of the beach Federal template (South Groin to North Groin) is still well within the Corps' parameters and will not justify an earlier nourishment.

Given two more summer seasons (2025 and 2026) before the beach is nourished, we can expect to see some crosswalks shortened or even closed at high tide over the next two years. While this will be an inconvenience at times, we want people to be aware and informed to consider these factors when visiting the beach.

As a reminder, during the 2019 season (picture below) prior to the last nourishment, there was no beach between Tybrisa Street and 18th Street at high tide:



Picture courtesy of AWR Strategic Consulting