

Army Corps allocates \$1.5 million to Encinitas-Solana Beach sand project



Lifeguards drive along the coast in Solana Beach in 2019. The city is working with Encinitas on a federal 50-year sand replenishment project. (Union-Tribune)

Funding will help complete planning for 50-year replenishment project

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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will allocate an additional \$1.5 million for the planning, engineering and design of a federal sand project expected to beef up beaches in Encinitas and Solana Beach for the next 50 years, Rep. Mike Levin, D-San Juan Capistrano, announced Friday, Jan. 22.

The Encinitas-Solana Beach Coastal Storm Damage Reduction Project was authorized in 2016 to stabilize the eroding bluffs against high-energy storm swells and rising sea levels.

Completion of the three-year pre-construction phase is expected to cost a total of about \$3 million, including \$75,000 each from the two cities involved. Most of the expense is covered by state and federal grants now in hand.

Sand replenishment will occur every five to 10 years for the 50-year life of the project, which was estimated to cost a total of \$167 million in 2015 dollars. Construction funding has yet to be secured, but if the money is obtained, sand dredged from offshore sites could arrive on beaches as soon as 2024.

“Completing the planning, engineering and design phase is a key step in this process, and I will continue to push for additional funding to begin construction,” Levin said in a news release.

A bluff collapse that killed three people in a family seated at Grandview Beach in Encinitas during the summer of 2019 brought renewed attention to the problem.

“As sea levels rise, the periodic addition of sand will help prevent additional bluff collapses,” Solana Beach Mayor Lesa Heebner said in the release. “The project will go a long way toward saving our bluffs and beaches for future generations, and I am thrilled that the federal funding we need ... is on the way.

Heebner and Encinitas Mayor Catherine Blakespear commended Levin and other local leaders who helped secure the funding.

“This challenge of securing our bluffs requires an all-hands-on-deck approach, and I am grateful for the partnership,” Blakespear said.

A congressional committee first authorized a feasibility study for the project in 1993 that led to the plan now underway.

The project is one of numerous periodic and ongoing efforts to stem erosion along the Southern California coast.

A little less than one year ago, Levin announced an allocation of \$400,000 for the Encinitas-Solana Beach project and a separate \$505,000 allocation for the planning, engineering and design of a similar shoreline project in San Clemente.

— *Phil Diehl is a reporter for The San Diego Union-Tribune*