MEMORANDUM

To: Council Members
From: Staff
Date: January 20, 2017 Council Meeting
Subject: Update on Offshore Foreign Sand Study by Nicole Fogarty, Legislative Affairs Manager, St. Lucie County

Introduction

At its meeting on September 18, 2015, Council reviewed the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Miami-Dade County Beach Renourishment Project. The Draft EA was submitted by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to examine the environmental effects of utilizing sand from several sources to renourish beaches in Miami-Dade County. The Draft EA concluded the preferred alternative is to use a combination of seven sand sources, including two sources located in the Atlantic Ocean offshore of the Treasure Coast Region. The Draft EA identified several non-domestic sand sources considered for the project, including a Bahamas site, which is only 65 miles from the Miami-Dade County project site. However, the Draft EA indicated the Bahamas site and other non-domestic sand sources were eliminated from consideration, because the Corps lacks authority, under Section 935 of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 1986, to acquire it if domestic sources are economically and environmentally available. Council recommended that the Corps provide justification to the U.S. Congress to allow the use of non-domestic sand sources for the project to avoid economic impacts to local governments in the Treasure Coast Region.

A new WRDA was signed into law last month. The Act includes a provision that authorizes, but does not compel, the Corps to study “the economic and noneconomic costs, benefits, and impacts of acquiring by purchase, exchange, or otherwise sediment from domestic and nondomestic sources for shoreline protection.” If funded by the Administration (Congress will face challenges funding the study without the ability to earmark), the study could mirror that which the Corps and Florida Department of Environmental Protection already completed prior to the EA discussed above, dubbed the SAND Study. This study language was added to the final WRDA bill after removing the more helpful provision included in the House version of WRDA by Congresswoman Lois Frankel that would have allowed the Corps to use non-domestic sand should it be economically viable.

Nicole Fogarty, Legislative Affairs Manager for St. Lucie County, will present an update to Council on the status of the foreign sand study and provide a historical perspective about why and how this provision was added to the Act.

Recommendation

For information only.