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Painter  
October 28, 2009

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## SAVING THE DAY AT FACTORY POINT

HAMPTON, VA -- In 2007 a group of over 100 Hampton citizens asked the City to host a summit at the Hampton Roads Convention Center, concerned that the recent partial destruction of the Factory Point spit near the entrance to Back River due to storms was the cause of increased flooding in their waterfront backyards. They wanted immediate action to restore the sand to the spit before the next hurricane struck the City. In addition, local boaters reported serious sand migration into existing channels. The City contracted with URS, Waterway Surveys and Engineering, and REMSA, Inc. to study the problem.

Through wave refraction studies and consultation with the Virginia Institute of Marine Science it was learned that the recent partial destruction of the spit was not the cause of flooding. The flooding was a natural effect of sea level rise and hurricanes. Moreover, the sand had not left the area; it had moved both east and west and was underwater. The erosion problem of tidal wetlands just upstream was the direct result, however, of the breach in the spit.

The City of Hampton and its consultants developed a plan to restore full navigability to Back River, return economic vitality to clamming grounds, restore the spit for reducing erosion and storm surge and recreate habitat for the Federal threatened northeastern beach tiger beetle and state endangered piping plover. The project was permitted by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the US Army Corps of Engineers in late summer 2009. The state Department of Environmental Quality issued a waiver in 2008.

The Back River/Factory Point project involved approximately 228,500 cubic yards of sand to be taken from 35 acres within the offshore sand mound that had moved into the Bay and pumped via a hydraulic cutter head dredge back to where it had been located for over 90 years. The berm with its tombolos is 300 feet wide, 2900 feet in length, and 8 feet high. Five breakwaters with an average length of 275 feet are being placed channelward of the restored spit to keep the restored berm in place. In addition, approximately 29,175 cubic yards of dredging is taking place in Back River to improve navigation in the existing channels.

Environmental concerns that were solved through the constant coordination provided by REMSA included mitigation offsite for unavoidable losses to submerged aquatic vegetation (eelgrass and widgeon grass) in a Virginia Institute of Marine Science approved site along the southern shoreline of Hampton. REMSA determined that some nonvegetated wetlands would be impacted and converted back to sandy beach. The northeastern beach tiger beetles were surveyed in 2008 and again in 2009 by an internationally recognized expert on the species, who concurred that the project would restore lost beetle habitat. Geotechnical reports by Waterway Surveys and Engineering showed that the berm sand was suitable for the beetles. A wildlife management plan was developed in conjunction with the City, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and US Fish and Wildlife Service to add protection to the birds and beetles using the spit. The completion of underwater archaeological surveys revealed no significant features to be impacted by the dredging or beach placement, and avoidance measures are in place for nearby cultural resources. The Corps of Engineers, REMSA and Waterway Surveys and Engineering developed an unexploded ordnance safety plan for proper handling of any unexploded ordnance that may be encountered during beach placement of sand. Dredged fines that are to be removed from the Back River channels will be disposed of in an approved upland borrow site in Hampton. The project is under construction as of October 2009.



Founded in Hampton in 1986, REMSA, Inc. — Research, Environmental and Management Support — is a woman owned, minority small business enterprise, which provides its collective scientific, management and regulatory expertise to private and government clients around the country. This diverse and innovative employer offers environmental and GIS services as well as coastal marine services, including endangered species observers on seagoing dredges and other vessels. REMSA also provides professional, scientific and technical staffing, information technology and management services.

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