

Higbee Beach (Pond Creek) Restoration Project

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs):

Q: How can the public stay informed on progress throughout the duration of the project?

A: The Office of Natural Resource Restoration will be posting updates on project progress including schedule updates, photos, and drone footage to the project's website (<https://www.nj.gov/dep/nrr/restoration/higbee-beach.html>) on a quarterly basis.

Q: Where did the funding for this project come from?

A: Project funding is provided through natural resource damage (NRD) recoveries by DEP's Office of Natural Resource Restoration. An appropriation for this funding was passed by the State's legislature in 2019.

Q: What areas of the wildlife management area (WMA) are closed for recreational purposes and what areas are open during construction?

A: Approximately 290 acres of the 1,160-acre WMA will be closed during construction from January 29, 2024, to December 2026. Trails on the northern end of the WMA and the dunes around Davey's Lake will remain open. The former magnesite area and interior marsh will remain closed through project completion. Please see the attached map of the closure area: [MAP](#).

Q: What areas of the beach will remain open during construction?

A: It is intended for beach access to remain open throughout construction except where the mouth of Pond Creek enters the Delaware Bay. This specific area will be closed and will cut off access between the southern and northern beach entrances.

Q: Where will parking be available for beach access and the WWII lookout tower?

A: Parking will be available to the south in the lot at the end of Sunset Blvd. as well as to the north at the end of New England Rd.

Q: What is the hauling route for truck traffic and where is the main construction entrance located?

A: The hauling route utilizes county roads and includes the use of Stimpson (CR 645) to S. Bayshore (CR 607) to Sunset (CR 606) or Broadway (CR 626) to Sunset (CR 606) and vice versa. Construction access is located at the parking lot across the street from the WWII lookout tower on Sunset Blvd. Please see a map of the hauling route and construction entrance here: [MAP](#).

Q: How will long-term maintenance and stewardship be funded after the restoration is complete?

A: As it is related to construction implementation and maintenance/monitoring, the contractor will provide a 2-year post construction warranty on all vegetation planted. During this timeframe, there may be small-scale replanting and/or adaptive management activities taking place to ensure a successful project long-term. Regarding long-term stewardship, this site will be maintained and/or enhanced with a combination of Statewide Development monies, which is a federal funding source derived from excise taxes on sporting goods (Pittman-Robertson), as well as Preserve New Jersey monies, which is a corporate business tax allocation distributed to conservation land managers for the purpose of enhancing wildlife habitat on State land. This is consistent with many other project sites across New Jersey's 360,000+ acres of State wildlife management areas.

Q: Will the restoration project impact hunting within the WMA?

A: As per current regulations, Higbee Beach WMA is closed to all hunting from September 1st until the Monday after the Six-day Firearm Deer Season. During construction, hunting will not be allowed within the 290 acres of the project area but will be permitted throughout the rest of the WMA. NJ Fish and Wildlife is actively discussing a plan on how to accommodate mixed-uses at the site following the completion of the restoration. This plan will include providing access and opportunities for hunting, fishing and wildlife watching. When complete, Fish and Wildlife will be presenting this plan to the Fish and Game Council and taking public comment.

Q: How will the construction affect adjacent coastlines?

A: The restoration project is not anticipated to impact coastlines north or south of the project area.

Q: What will the channel look like after restoration?

A: After restoration, Pond Creek will be an 80-foot-wide top width channel that is anticipated to maintain water at various depths throughout the tide cycle. The widening of the channel will permanently cut off access between the southern and northern beaches since it will likely not be traversable by foot. However, trail systems within the WMA will allow for access across Pond Creek to reach the opposite side of the beach system. No hard structures are currently proposed (e.g. jetty) as part of the channel opening.

Q: Are there anticipated impacts to freshwater resources?

A: Baseline studies conducted during the design development process monitored water levels and salinity throughout the Pond Creek marsh system and up to Bayshore Road. At present conditions, salinity measurements recorded saline water inundating into the upper Pond Creek marsh system. The design intent and the foundation of the berm concept is to protect the upper freshwater watershed from saline water and future salt-water inundation and enhance the already occurring

daily tidal cycles in the predominantly saline portions of the Pond Creek marsh system. The design ultimately restores the tidal cycles (specifically tidal water drainage) that have been disrupted by activities that previously occurred within the former Magnesite area and provides protection of the fresh-water resources in the upper watershed of Pond Creek. In order to obtain the necessary authorizations and permits to proceed with the project, it was required and demonstrated that these objectives would not increase the flood risk to the upper portions of the Pond Creek watershed.

Q: How will sensitive species and habitats within the WMA be protected during construction?

A: A qualified wildlife biologist/ecologist will serve as an on-site biological monitor to prevent impacts to rare and critical threatened and endangered wildlife and plants during construction, implement monitoring plans for critical wildlife, verify that construction progress is in compliance with permit conditions, and verify that temporary impacts are restored to the satisfaction of the regulatory agencies for protection and mitigation of impacts to sensitive species and habitats. A substantial pre-construction survey effort was conducted to incorporate avoidance and minimization to the extent feasible within the work limits. In the event wildlife species are observed to be trapped within the limits of disturbance, the biological monitor will relocate the animal to an area safe from construction operations outside of the limits of disturbance.

Q: Will the “ghost tracks” be disturbed or removed as part of this project?

A: The majority of the “ghost tracks” will remain in place. Only portions encountered during the widening of Pond Creek will be removed, in which they will be cut and stockpiled with other larger surface debris remnants from the magnesite for future interpretive use by the State after the restoration project. The areas of the magnesite itself will be covered with fill material designed to support and construct a coastal maritime forest, dunes and coastal grasslands for a variety of species and habitats.

Q: To whom should the public submit comments, questions, or concerns regarding the restoration project?

A: Questions and comments throughout the duration of the restoration project can be sent to: NJDEP-HBR-inquiries@portal3.pbid.com