

Cape May to install new safety signs at all beach entrances

By JACK FICHTER
Cape May Star and Wave

CAPE MAY — New signs offering information on rip currents and shore breaks and flags indicating ocean condition will be installed at each beach entrance in the next three weeks.

At a May 20 meeting of the Beach Safety Committee, Superintendent of Public Works Joe Picard said the back of the signs, which beachgoers would see as they leave the beach, would thank patrons for visiting Cape May's beach.

An additional sign will inform beachgoers that smoking, including e-cigarettes, and alcohol are prohibited on the beach. The sign would also state the beach is closed from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

Committee secretary Kate Wyatt noted lifeguards go on duty at 10 a.m.

Beach Patrol Capt. Geoff Rife said many guards arrive early for workouts.

"A lot of times our guards are scattered from Poverty Beach all the way down to the Cove during their workouts with running, swimming, paddling and rowing," he said.

Before 10 a.m., cell-phones and pagers can summons guards. Deputy City Manager Jerry Inderwies said beaches are officially guarded from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Rife noted beach safety signs at entrances state "only swim when lifeguards are on duty." The beach patrol offers after-hours protection until dark in July, August and September, he said.

Guards were on duty the weekend of May 25-26 and are scheduled for the weekend of June 1-2, Rife said. Beginning June 8, lifeguards will be on stands with a skeleton crew. By June 24, every beach will be open with a full staff of lifeguards, he said.

The Beach Safety Committee is looking for volunteers to measure the beach. Lower Cape May Regional High School science teacher Jeff Martin has a kayak-rental business in summer in Cape May. Beach Safety Committee Chairman Dennis DeSatnick said Martin indicated he may be able to have some of his student interns measure the beach this summer.

"If that is implemented, possibly in the fall, if the committee feels it's necessary, we could bring in some citizens who would be interested in doing a beach measurement for the months students are unable to do it," DeSatnick said.

Students measured the beach in February but have a limited amount of time available during the school day for such activities, he said.

A beachfront P.A. system installed from the Cove to Gurney Street is functioning. Rife said announcements have been recorded for the system including a morning message which informs the public the necessity of buying a beach tag and that bicycles must exit the Promenade at that hour.

"We'll also have a pre-recorded lightning storm message for when storms quickly move across the bay," he said.

Inderwies said he noticed the beaches at Howard and Jefferson avenues appeared cut out.

"It just looks like a bowl," Rife said. "It just looks like someone cut a saucer in half."



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

Cape May's new beach safety signs include information about rip currents, the dangerous shorebreak and ocean-condition flags.

He said the beach turns near Convention Hall and is impacted by swells. DeSatnick suggested a drone photo be taken of the beaches. Rife suggested getting a baseline for the beach in May to see what changes occur from June to September.

DeSatnick the city is

not arriving until after the summer season, he said it would be interesting to see how the beaches change over the summer.

The committee discussed the city scheduling a future meeting with U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, D-2nd, to discuss whether Cape May could receive a new template for beach replenishment to modify the surf zone based on a beach safety issue and if the beach could become a demonstration project through the Army Corps.

DeSatnick said Van Drew was on board with the concepts based on a letter he sent the committee last August. Inderwies said the Army Corps saw the mission of beach replenishment for property protection and stabilization.

"It has been very successful; the town does not flood like it used to," he said.

Inderwies said the beaches have tripled in size since beach replenishment began.

DeSatnick Foundation

Continued from Page A1

The DeSatnick Foundation supports "They Will Surf Again," with its annual adaptive surfing program to be held this year Aug. 4 behind the Wildwoods Convention Center. He said the program began in Wildwood Crest with 12 adaptive athletes and 60 volunteers and has morphed into 100 adaptive athletes that come from as far away as Kentucky. The event now draws 500 volunteers, DeSatnick said.

"Our only request with this donation to the Wildwoods is that these chairs are available one day for "They Will Surf Again" to borrow, so we can use them for our adaptive athletes," he said.

He thanked members of the North Wildwood, Wildwood and Wildwood Crest beach patrols for their continued support of the foundation and Life Rolls On.

DeSatnick recognized John Lynch for his support of the DeSatnick Foundation and Life Rolls On.

The DeSatnick Foundation will hold its annual signature fundraising event, the Cape to Cape Paddleboard Race, on Aug. 18. The race follows a 17-mile course from Lewes, Del., to Cape May. A second, shorter race will go from Cape May Point to Cape May.



Jack Fichter/CAPE MAY STAR AND WAVE

The beach wheelchairs have oversized tires for easy maneuverability on soft sand.



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—Chad DeSatnick, founder, DeSatnick Foundation

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