Long-term erosion fix urged

- Activist calls for pols to weigh climate change effects
- Says coastal areas to be hard-hit by rising sea levels

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Local elected officials need to find long-term solutions to help protect Long Island’s coastal communities from beach erosion, an environmental advocate said yesterday.

Mastic Beach, the Dune Road area in Westhampton and downtown Montauk will be some of the hardest-hit areas by rising sea levels and climate change, and authorities must take steps to protect them, even if those decisions are politically unpopular.

That’s what Kevin McAllister, founder and president of Sag Harbor-based environmental group Defend H2O, told residents and environmental groups at the South Fork Natural History Museum & Nature Center in Bridgehampton.

Local officials need to “break that shackle” of making safe political moves and “start making [long-term] decisions about Dune Road and downtown Montauk and Mastic Beach,” McAllister said.

One proposed project that may not be taking a longer-term view is the $1.16 billion Fire Island Inlet to Montauk Point project, said McAllister, a long-time consultant on coastal management.

The project, which would fund dredging and shoreline projects along 83 miles of ocean and bay shorelines, is expected to begin in 2018.

McAllister has spoken at several town meetings in Montauk and Southampton regarding the controversial project, which the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is handling.

At a public hearing earlier this month, Montauk residents and local legislators told Army Corps officials that the proposed project is not enough to solve the problems of beach erosion and storm protection in the downtown Montauk area.

McAllister said he was not impressed with how the Army Corps conducted similar projects in South Florida.

“This is just another job for them and then they cut and run,” he said. “We have to invest in a proper approach.”

McAllister said that instead of dredging, removing some of the seasonal hotels near the shoreline and bringing in native beach sand would be a better long-term solution to restoring the beach area’s natural systems and protecting Montauk’s downtown area from further erosion.

The Army Corps wasn’t immediately available for comment.

Sara Davison, executive director of the Wainscott-based environmental nonprofit Friends of Georgica Pond Foundation, said more information needs to be available for the public on what coastal erosion means for their communities.

Annie Hall, the foundation’s vice president, echoed McAllister’s push for thinking about the future: “Long-term problems need long-term solutions.”

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**IN BRIEF**

**LEVITTOWN**

**Woman with son, 8, faces DWI charge after crash**

A Garden City Park woman was charged with driving while intoxicated after she was involved in a crash with her 8-year-old son in the backseat, police said.

Nassau County police said Christine Vitrano, 38, of Central Avenue, was driving east on Hempstead Turnpike in Levittown at 8:20 p.m. Friday when her car was involved in a crash with another vehicle going the same direction.

Investigators said they determined Vitrano was driving while intoxicated. She was arrested and charged under Leandra’s Law, which makes it a felony to drive while intoxicated with a child under 16 in the car.

Other charges include aggravated driving while intoxicated with a child under 16, driving while ability impaired by drugs and endangering the welfare of a child, police said.

There were no injuries, and Vitrano’s son was released to a family member. Vitrano was arraigned yesterday at First District Court in Hempstead. She was held on $5,000 cash or bond, according to online court records. — LAURA BLASEY

**NASSAU COUNTY**

**Queens woman arrested in series of burglaries**

A Queens woman was arrested Friday night in connection with a series of burglaries in Nassau County, police said.

Nassau police said Nicole Holzer, 20, of 78th Street, Middle Village, entered several homes and stole belongings from them in March.

On March 4, police said she and another robber took jewelry, cash and personal papers from a home on Dyckman Avenue in Garden City Park.

On March 21, police said Holzer and an accomplice entered a home on Lehrer Avenue in Elmont, taking jewelry, electronic equipment and cash. Police said that on the same day, Holzer and another chief also entered home on Wilson Boulevard in Mineola and took jewelry and cash.

Police identified Holzer after an investigation into the burglaries and arrested her Friday at her home.

Police said the other suspect has not been arrested and that the investigation is continuing.

Holzer was charged with three counts of second-degree burglary. She was scheduled to be arraigned yesterday at First District Court in Hempstead.

— LAURA BLASEY

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**Fright at the opera**

An opera lover sprinkling the ashes of his mentor last evening into the orchestra pit at the Metropolitan Opera prompted the evacuation of the theater while police probed the incident, NYPD officials said.

A man in formal dress approached the pit during the second intermission shortly after 5 p.m. and sprinkled powder from a bag on each side of the orchestra pit, police said at a news conference at Lincoln Center.

The Met canceled the rest of the matinee performance of “Guillaume Tell” and later canceled an evening performance of “L’Italiana in Algeri” while NYPD counterterrorism officials and the Department of Public Health tested the substance.

Witnesses in the audience told police the man had traveled from out of town to sprinkle the ashes. Police did not release the name of the man, and they said they did not expect to file criminal charges.

— JOHN ASBURY