

EAST PASS EXPERIMENTAL RE-OPENING PROJECT

Client: Bay County



Bay County authorized Coastal Tech to implement a monitoring program following the experimental re-opening of East Pass in 2001 in order to assist in evaluating the impact, performance and “success” of the project. The design basis for the proposed project was set forth in Coastal Tech’s: “*Conceptual Design and Environmental...*,” completed in December 1999.

Coastal Tech’s project included a 3,600 foot long channel connecting the approximate -10 foot (NGVD) contour on the St. Andrews Bay side of the closure spit, with the similar contour on the Gulf side. Dredging

and dune construction began in November 2001 following marine turtle nesting season and continued into December 2001.

As part of the evolution of the project and its regulatory review, a number of specific goals for the monitoring were developed. Among these were to evaluate the response of the re-opened pass on the hydrodynamics of St. Andrews Bay Entrance (SABE). The University of Florida sub-consulting team concluded that the re-opened East Pass did not result in any discernible hydrodynamic trend at SABE. The analysis confirmed the design prediction that the experimental channel at East Pass was [intentionally] too small and would close fairly quickly because of its insufficient size.

St. Andrews Bay Resource Management Association found indications that the pass re-opening appeared to improve certain water quality parameters in the eastern arm of St. Andrews Bay Water which is an area of significant ecological importance. There were no definitive changes to the overall percent cover of the sea grass beds in the area during the actual opening and the grasses observed appeared to be very healthy. The monitoring collected data on the size and status of beach mice populations in the project area. Investigators found that the East Pass dune and vegetation restoration offered significant protection to mouse habitat areas and the mouse population on West Crooked Island progressively expanded eastward during the monitoring period.

The East Pass Experimental Dredging Project may be considered successful in meeting the test plan objectives. While not all results were sufficient to draw definitive long-term conclusions, the results showed that some value resulted to St Andrews Bay from the East Pass opening with few if any negative impacts.

Key Elements

- Permitting
- Topographic Bathymetric Surveys
- Current & Water Level Measurements
- Beach Mouse Surveys
- Water Quality
- Sea Grass Communities
- Sea Turtle Nesting
- Nesting/Wintering Birds
- Aerial Photography
- Compaction Testing

Date: 2003

Cost: \$173,698
(without construction)

Contact:

*Ken Schnell, P.M.,
Public Works Director
Bay County
225 McKenzie Avenue
Panama City, FL
(850) 743-1378
(850)784-6151 Fax*



Enhancing Coastal Life.