

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Analysis: Did America's beaches do their jobs this hurricane season?

FORT MYERS, FL – Now that the winds have died down and the waves have stopped crashing, Americans are ready to bid farewell to another active hurricane season. Although most would like to forget this past season, experts are still working to assess how the nation's beaches performed in their mission to minimize storm damage to public and private structures and infrastructure.

This year turned out to be the second most destructive season on record (behind the 2005 season), with more than \$50 billion in damage. The season began more active than normal, but tapered off in October. Overall, Hurricane Ike was the most destructive storm, making landfall near Galveston, Texas, as a Category 2 storm. Hurricanes Gustav and Dolly were also very destructive.

Here is a quick wrap-up of how the nation's beaches fared during the season's most notable storms.

### Hurricane Dolly

Hurricane Dolly made landfall on South Padre Island, Texas, on July 23 as a Category 2 storm. Winds were hovering around 100 mph. Dolly caused no deaths in Texas, but it became (at that time) the most damaging hurricane in the state since Hurricane Rita in 2005.

"South Padre beaches weren't too bad off after Hurricane Dolly, and they recovered fairly well," said Cameron Perry, P.E., an engineer with HDR | Shiner Moseley, based in Corpus Christi, Texas. "But this storm combined with the elevated water levels and strong waves associated with Hurricane Ike significantly impacted the beaches and dunes. It is damage that's going to have to be repaired. Currently, the Corps is looking to place beneficial-use material along the beach, and a large-scale beach nourishment is being designed."

### Hurricane Fay

Hurricane Fay first hit south Florida late on Aug. 18 and zigzagged over the state for several days. It became the first storm in recorded history to make landfall in Florida four times.

"Our beaches did their job during Hurricane Fay – they protected upland structures – but we did lose some sacrificial sand, which now needs to be replaced," said Brevard County Watershed Program Manager Virginia Barker. "As a result, we are now working on a \$4.7 million FEMA emergency berm restoration project for Satellite Beach, Indian Harbour Beach and the Archie Carr National Wildlife

Refuge, as well as a \$15 million beach renourishment project for Indian Shores and Melbourne Beach. Despite Fay parking over Cape Canaveral for an entire day while dumping a record 30 inches of rain, our federal shore protection project along Cocoa Beach weathered the storm extremely well and does not require any recovery assistance.”

## **Hurricane Gustav**

Hurricane Gustav made landfall in Louisiana as a Category 2 hurricane on Aug. 31. Strong winds, high storm surges and heavy rains caused a great deal of damage in the state, but not as much as Hurricane Katrina did in 2005.

“Our beaches got hit really hard by both Hurricane Gustav and Hurricane Ike. There was a lot of erosion,” said Luke Le Bas, P.E., engineer manager for the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources. “There is already some self-healing going on, but it is too early to tell what our total sand loss will be. One thing we know for certain is the continual need to replenish sand on these islands.”

## **Hurricane Hanna**

Hurricane Hanna moved northward in the Atlantic Ocean along the east coast of the United States as a tropical storm before it moved offshore. Peak winds for Hannah were only 60 mph, but it was enough to move around some sand.

“The beaches in North Carolina that have been properly nourished did their jobs admirably. However, in places where erosion has been allowed to continue unabated, homes were damaged -- a few of them significantly,” said ASBPA President and Caswell Beach, N.C., Mayor Harry Simmons. “We must continue to find the resources to replace sand that is lost to the system, which is much less expensive than the loss of the public and private structures and infrastructure that will be otherwise endangered unnecessarily.”

## **Hurricane Ike**

Hurricane Ike was the third most destructive hurricane ever to hit the United States. Experts estimate Ike’s damage to exceed \$27 billion, also making it the third costliest U.S. hurricane of all time behind Hurricane Andrew of 1992 and Hurricane Katrina of 2005. At one point, the diameter of Ike’s tropical storm- and hurricane-force winds were 550 miles and 240 miles respectively, making Ike the most massive Atlantic hurricane recorded. Ike made its final landfall at Galveston, Texas, on Sept. 13 as a Category 2 hurricane with winds of 110 mph.

“Galveston took a huge hit from Hurricane Ike. We lost about 70 feet of beach – equivalent to 1.5 rows of houses,” said Texas A&M University at Galveston Regents Professor and Associate Vice President of Research and Graduate Studies William Seitz, Ph.D. “It was worse than you would have expected; but understandable -- because the storm created such a large surge that the entire beach was underwater.”

Dr. Seitz added that some of the sand is coming back to shore now, but that a thorough analysis will need to be done by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to find out the best way to renourish the beach. He also noted that beaches that had been nourished in the past fared better than those that had not.

Simmons summarized the hurricane season by saying, “Adequate maintenance of our coastal infrastructure must be a priority of the new administration and Congress. Failure to invest sufficiently in

the protections afforded by wide, sandy beaches with dunes, for example, will only cost America more in storm damage losses and recovery in the long run.”

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ABOUT ASBPA: Founded in 1926, the American Shore and Beach Preservation Association (ASBPA) represents the scientific, technical and political interests along the coast in an effort to shape national research and policy concerning shore and beach management and restoration. ASBPA strives to engage in a factual debate on coastal issues and economics that will foster sound, far-sighted and economical development and preservation of our beaches; thereby aiding in placing their beliefs within the reach of the largest possible number of people in accordance with the ideals of a democratic nation. For additional information about ASBPA, please visit [www.asbpa.org](http://www.asbpa.org).

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