

# Smathers Beach gets a makeover Fifteen to 30 trucks a day bring in fresh veneer of sand

BY Les Neuhaus Citizen Staff

Smathers Beach is recapturing some of its former good looks with a massive infusion of silicon.



Key West city officials say the makeover -- "renourishment" in beach-speak -- consists of a fresh new veneer of lily-white sand, and has been a long time coming.

Heavy equipment staging for the project began on June 7, but it wasn't until Thursday that crews began spreading 17,500 tons of sand to restore aspects of the popular man-made beach.

Mother Nature is responsible for the beach's loss of luster, city spokeswoman Alyson Crean said.

"The Smathers Beach renourishment is a project to replenish sand that wears away over the years from storms and erosion," Crean said. "It's a \$749,000 project with 50 percent grant funding from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. The other 50 percent of the cost is split by the city and by a grant from the Monroe County Tourist Development Council (TDC)."

The TDC's capital improvement fund helps sustain areas and resources that attract tourists to the Keys -- such as beaches, she said.

"It's been over seven years since the last full renourishment," she said. "In the intervening years, the Federal Emergency Management Agency has funded occasional berm repair projects after tropical storms."

The project will continue through early July, said Janet K. Luce, the on-site inspector for Atkins Global, a London-based global engineering and design consulting firm that recently acquired the Tampa firm PBS&J.



"We provide construction oversight and permit compliance," Luce said. "We have an environmental-services contract set up with the city of Key West."

The project is moving west to east along the beach, which will remain open to the public, said Doug Bradshaw, senior project manager for the city's Engineering Department. "There may be periodic closings of small sections of the beach for safety, but we're trying to keep everything there operating normally."

Between 15 and 30 trucks a day are bringing loads of sand to the beach, he said.

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