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Friday, 13 October 2006

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LOCAL NEWS STORY

Council defends sand dump at Urenui

13 October 2006
By LEIGHTON KEITH

Attempts by the New Plymouth District Council to stop erosion at Urenui Beach has been a waste of money, locals say.

The council recently spent \$11,000 moving sand from the Urenui River to the beach front to stop erosion.

Two weeks later 90% of the sand was washed away but the council says the plan was the agreed course of action.

Urenui Beach monitoring committee spokesman Neil Larsen said they told the council its plan was a waste of money.

"Using soft sand on a West coast beach won't work."

He said the money could have been better spent.

"We would like to think that that figure would go a long way to finishing that wall."

Mr Larsen is also unhappy about the council's price to complete the seawall.

He said the monitoring committee got a price from the council's preferred contractor and it was about a third of what the council said it would cost.

Urenui Boat Club Commodore Darcy Mace said moving the sand was a complete waste of time and money.

"They may well not have done the job. It is money down the tube."

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Neil Larsen, left, and Darcy Mace check out the erosion at Urenui Beach. TREVOR READ/Taranaki Daily News

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Recent high tides had torn down the sand bank. "You could just see the sand being washed away."

Mr Mace said the existing seawall was working marvellously and and didn't see why the council needed to get new plans and drawings done to complete it.

"There is already a working model there that has proved very successful."

Mr Mace said the hole where the sand had been taken from the river was now a danger itself as it was filling up with logs.

Council parks manager Mark Bruhn said moving the sand was a temporary measure while the council applied for resource consent to have the rest of the seawall to be installed.

"I understand the locals thinking \$11,000 of rocks is probably better than \$11,000 on moving sand. The difficulty is we don't have a consent to put any rocks there," Mr Bruhn said.

The council moved the sand after the traditional high tides and stormy season had passed, he said.

He would not say if \$11,000 was cost effective for two weeks' protection.

"I don't think asking that question is a very fair question, if you are asking if \$11,000 is a fair return for two weeks protection, Mr Bruhn said.

"I know that is the result but I don't think we intended to do that for it to be washed away at that speed. We can't predict all of the weather patterns."

The monitoring committee had agreed to the work, he said.

"I'm not going to get into a public debate with the locals about what they think and what they told us."

Mr Bruhn said his staff told him moving the sand was the agreed course of action after speaking to the committee.

Council project team manager Jeff Bondy said the resource consent would be lodged with the Taranaki Regional Council within a couple of weeks.

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