

Washington Update:

Negotiations for a Budget Resolution have continued over the past few weeks between House and Senate Budget Committee leaders. The Budget Resolution establishes the framework for Congress to develop the annual appropriations bills. Currently, appropriators are preparing rough outlines of the 13 annual appropriations bills that fund the federal government. We anticipate that only a few, if any, appropriations bills will pass prior to start of the fiscal year in October. Final approval of the bill that funds the Army Corps of Engineers and the Corps shoreline protection projects, the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, will likely be delayed until later this year or early 2005.

The complications regarding the FY05 Budget Resolution, coupled with the partisan tension of an election year, make it highly unlikely that many federal agencies will see FY05 funding in time for the start of the fiscal year. They will operate under a Continuing Resolution, a "holding pattern" that will keep the federal government running under the current fiscal year's budget figures.

Another legislative vehicle that is of particular interest to Mantoloking is the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). This bill authorizes the Corps of Engineers to work on a series of projects, including beach projects. Both Senators Corzine and Lautenberg have requested that the Senate WRDA bill include authorization for Mantoloking's beach project. The WRDA bill is progressing slowly forward in the Senate. The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee is currently developing a WRDA bill for consideration sometime this spring.