

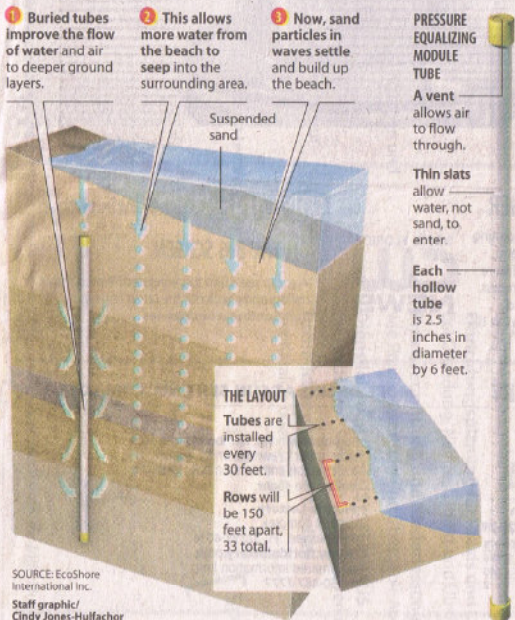
SAVING OUR SAND

Hillsboro tests device designed to build up beach



BEACH BUILDER: Kenneth W. Christensen, president of EcoShore International Inc., holds one of the tubes that will be used in a grid on a 1-mile stretch of Hillsboro Beach. Staff photo/Robert Duyos

How the system works



SOURCE: EcoShore International Inc.
Staff graphic/
Cindy Jones-Hulfachor

BY LINDA TRISCHITTA
STAFF WRITER

HILLSBORO BEACH • With the installation of 100 plastic tubes along its shore this week, this town is embarking on an experiment that could save it millions of dollars in future efforts to push back the encroaching sea.

The technology, called Pressure Equalizing Modules, or PEMs, is a decade-old Danish product that has been used with reported success on beaches in Europe, Africa and Asia. Here, it will be tested for the first time in the United States, in a project that will be studied by engineers around the country.

"You can't fight nature and if you have a huge storm, it will take the sand, but PEMs will help the beach withstand the storms," said Kenneth W. Christensen, president of EcoShore International Inc., which has brought the product to Hillsboro Beach and is coordinating the installation. He expects a wider beach in six to nine months.

Beach renourishment is controversial because it costs the United States billions, and often expends tax dollars for a temporary benefit that may only last until the next hurricane. In Florida, Gov. Charlie Christ has asked

■ BEACH CONTINUES ON 2A

Huizenga to sell half of Dolphins

BY PAUL OWERS
AND SARAH TALALAY
STAFF WRITERS

MIAMI GARDENS • Miami Dolphins owner H. Wayne Huizenga said Friday he's selling half the franchise to real estate developer and part-time Palm Beach resident Stephen M. Ross.

Huizenga will remain the managing general partner, but he's clearly moving toward relinquishing ownership of the football team. Ross is paying \$550 million, less any debt, and is positioned to buy controlling interest. "My heart does not want me to do this, but my head says it is the right thing to do at this time," Huizenga, 70, said, adding that he agreed to sell with his age and estate planning in mind.

The deal includes the team, Dolphin Stadium and surrounding land, all valued at \$1.1 billion, Huizenga said.

Ross was ranked No. 68 on Forbes' list last year of the 400 richest Americans with a net worth of \$4.5 billion. He is chairman and founder of the Related Cos., a New York-based real estate firm with an affiliate company in South Florida.

■ DOLPHINS CONTINUES ON 16A



PARTNERS: Stephen M. Ross, left, and H. Wayne Huizenga. Staff photo/Michael Laughlin

THE DOLPHINS DEAL

\$1.1 billion: The value of Miami Dolphins football franchise.

\$550 million: Developer Stephen Ross' investment for half of it.

VIDEO

Watch highlights of the H. Wayne Huizenga and Stephen M. Ross press conference at Sun-Sentinel.com/dolphins

INSIDE: Bill Parcels has no problem with the ownership move, according to Huizenga. 1C

Gay teen in woman's clothing is shot dead

BY BRIAN HAAS AND SOFIA SANTANA
STAFF WRITERS

FORT LAUDERDALE • The shooting death of a gay teenage boy who was dressed in women's clothing is being investigated as a possible hate crime, while detectives try to determine whether he was targeted because of his sexual orientation.

Simmie Williams Jr., 17, was attacked on the 1000 block of Sistrunk Boulevard by two young men who wore dark clothing and might live in the neighborhood, police said. Williams, who was wearing a dress and was known in the area by his first name or as "Chris" or "Beyonce," was shot about 12:45 a.m. Friday and soon afterward died at Broward General Medical Center, police said. It's unclear what Williams was doing in the area, about four miles from his house, but police are investigating whether he was working as a prostitute, officials said.



VICTIM: Simmie Williams Jr., shot as he stood along Sistrunk Boulevard in Fort Lauderdale, died at Broward General Medical Center.

■ KILLING CONTINUES ON 16A

DAILY DIGEST

SUN-SENTINEL WEATHER

Today, 87

Tonight, 71

Tomorrow, 85

Complete weather on back page of **BUSINESS**

EcoShore Int'l, Inc. in the news

Media coverage in relation to the first PEM project in the USA was substantial.

The biggest article was the enclosed in the Sun-Sentinel, the largest newspaper in the area. The article was followed up with more stories during the installation of PEMs the following week.

Several other media published stories, and the television station Local 10 made an interview with Kenneth W. Christensen, EcoShore which was shown on the 6 o'clock news

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Hillsboro tests beach builder

■ BEACH

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1A

the state Legislature for \$20 million to rebuild beaches this year. But ask beach lovers, Sunshine State visitors or officials in oceanside municipalities and many will tell you it's worth every penny.

"Beaches protect \$4 billion worth of public and private property and generate \$1 billion in economic activity in Broward County, and that includes tourists' expenses, jobs and increased property values," said Stephen Higgins, the county's beach erosion administrator. "Spending \$40 million or \$50 million on a beach renourishing project sounds like a lot of money, but when you look at the benefits, it's an effective thing to do."

In Hillsboro Beach and elsewhere, retreating waves drag the sand out to sea, lowering the beach. Storms only make this syndrome worse.

Using only nature's power, the buried PEMs, about as big around as soda bottle, have horizontal vents thinner than a hair that admit water but bar the sand. They are designed to let retreating sea water drain through them but leave the sand behind.

"The scientific premise is sound," said Rick Spadoni, senior vice president of Coastal

Planning & Engineering Inc. The Boca Raton company has performed beach-widening jobs from Nantucket, Mass., to Louisiana and is currently developing projects for Boca Raton and the town of Palm Beach. "If it works in Hillsboro, we'd have an interest in using the PEMs," he said.

Water jets and mechanical drills will bury the 6-foot-long white tubes 3 feet below the sand in 33 vertical rows from the Port de Mer condos south one mile, where now at high tide the ocean breaks upon the sea wall and the beach disappears.

A race is on to finish the installation before the turtle-nesting season begins March 1. Hillsboro Beach officials said no turtles nested in this area last year and have applied for a waiver from government agencies that would also allow 14,000 cubic yards of sand to be trucked in and dumped on top of the PEMs. If the waiver is not granted by state and federal agencies during turtle-nesting season, the town will haul in the sand after the season ends Nov. 1.

The town is drawing from its own beach renourishment fund to begin the three-year project. It will cost \$150,000 per year to install and maintain the first mile of PEMs. Christensen said the installation can be extended southward at \$100,000 per mile,



Staff graphic/Cindy Jones-Huffachor

Environmental Protection has agreed to pick up 30 percent of the tab.

"It's been a cooperative effort by the company, town and agencies to pull together and to get this to the point that it is at now," Stephen said.

Once the PEMs are in the ground, Spadoni will be among those waiting to see if the system proves itself. "I have been in the industry for 30 years and we've seen many innovations come and go."

Spadoni described other failed attempts at beach renourishing, like burying Christmas trees or concrete tetrapods that look like giant children's jacks.

"We're not dismissing it, but I don't tend to get excited until I see some results that hold the beach. We're always hopeful that something will come along. Especially after we renourish them, we want that sand to last as long as possible."

As do residents and officials. Sheldon Gross, an oceanfront homeowner and president of the beach-advocacy group Hillsboro Beach Alliance, said, "I'd like to be able to see people enjoy the beach safely. I can't wait to walk the full length of the beach again."

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