

# PRESS-REGISTER

Editorial, taken from the editorial page

## Islanders will have to turn to Congress

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THE BEST thing that can be said about the \$1.5 million settlement of Dauphin Island residents' lawsuit against the federal government is that it ends nearly a decade of legal wrangling over the impact of dredging in the Mobile Ship Channel.

But that \$1.5 million won't go very far toward achieving a solution for the erosion that's destroying the island's west end. Many millions of dollars will be needed to support a project aimed at mitigating the damage caused by storms and the daily pounding of waves on the island's beaches.

The \$1.44 million provided by the federal government in the settlement (the state of Alabama will pay another \$60,000) may fund a feasibility study for a beach renourishment project as well as limited engineering work. However, the Dauphin Island Property Owners Association obviously hoped for more when it filed a lawsuit in 2000 claiming that dredging by the U.S. Army of Corps of Engineers in the Mobile Ship Channel was causing erosion on the island.

But as Dauphin Island Mayor Jeff Collier said, that battle is over now. Islanders must change their focus and redouble their efforts to persuade Congress to include Dauphin Island in the massive federal restoration of the barrier islands in the Mississippi Sound.

Earlier this year, Congress approved \$439 million to restore Mississippi's barrier islands.

Dauphin Island is part of the same barrier island chain, but Congress didn't see fit to include it in the restoration program.

In approving the funding, Congress noted that the program offers many benefits, including building up islands that serve as a buffer against storms. The project's value as a coastal protection measure also should help economic redevelopment in areas hard-hit by Hurricane Katrina.

These goals dovetail with Dauphin Island residents' beach restoration plans. We hope U.S. Rep. Jo Bonner and Alabama's U.S. senators, Jeff Sessions and Richard Shelby, will carry that message to the Capitol next year.