

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in opposition to Sarasota County's application for a permit from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to dredge a boating channel to separate two barrier islands- Siesta Key and Casey Key.

The permit requests permission to dig a 3000 foot long, 60 foot wide, 6 foot deep channel through the beach, mangroves, turtle nesting and bird nesting habitat. The plan calls for trapping 260,000 square feet of sand and pumping it back onto the beaches on an ongoing basis. The new boat channel will require ongoing dredging and no one denies that it will cause erosion on the existing beaches. Homeowners and environmental groups have already retained counsel and intend to sue for damages. If that is not enough information to deny the permit, consider these additional reasons:

1. The estuary is also a manatee habitat and what is proposed is a boating channel.
2. The beach is a well-documented loggerhead sea turtle nesting habitat which is currently only accessible on foot or by small boat. It has no homes, lights or roads.
3. The proposed new boating channel will take 3.3 acres of mangroves, 12.5 acres of sea grass, slice through the Jim Neville Marine Preserve area, and eliminate one acre of pristine Gulf of Mexico beach.
4. Little Sarasota Bay, an estuary, will be opened to the Gulf of Mexico. It will be devastated by the proposed channel. The National Marine Fisheries Service says Little Sarasota Bay is a "nationally important aquatic resource." The state of Florida has designated Little Sarasota Bay as part of its Outstanding Florida Waters program. It is an important fish nursery and wading bird habitat.
5. Acres and acres of wetlands including four types of seagrass will be dredged and the proposal indicates that seagrass and mangroves will be easily transplanted and will multiply. Has this been accomplished successfully? If seagrass could grow where they wish to plant it, wouldn't it already be there?
6. The channel violates FEMA rules.

I respectfully request that you deny this permit. Sarasota County has three existing boating channels: Venice Inlet, New Pass and Big Pass in Sarasota. This plan is ecologically destructive and has no merit.

Sincerely,

{your name and address}