



Beach Prisms work by reducing the amount of energy in incoming waves before the waves reach the shoreline. Waves pass through the specially designed slots.



Louis Marusik, General Manager at Smith-Carolina, and Jay McKenna, Regional Sales Manager, at the Terrapin Nature Area. Only the top of the prisms show, indicating the amount of sand that has been accumulated on that beach.

PROTECTING YOUR PROPERTY *and* THE ENVIRONMENT

BY KAREN M. ALLEY

You've just moved into the home of your dreams, a beautiful coastal house situated on a piece of property right on the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW). During your first evening at your new home you sit out on the porch sipping iced tea and watching the sun go down, when all of a sudden a fishing boat careens by at 20 knots, well above the posted speed limit. The wake left by the boat rises four feet up your property, and as it rushes back, it takes a chunk of your sand with it.

Beach erosion is a problem faced by property owners on any coast, not just the ocean-front. Strong winds, high waves and fast boats can wreak havoc on any waterfront property. Many homeowners struggle with whether to use some sort of retaining wall – building a bulkhead or installing rip rap – or just letting the area remain natural and suffer the consequences. But Smith-Midland, a Virginia-based company with offices at Smith-Carolina in

Reidsville, NC, is marketing a product that solves the erosion problem while creating a better environment for wildlife – Beach Prisms.

Beach Prisms are specially shaped, permeable, precast concrete products, shaped somewhat like a triangle with a parabolic curve, that help dissipate the energy of the waves. The idea for the project came from Silvia Gouldsbrough, a native of England who noticed that the beaches grew wider along the part of the English Channel where the Royal Navy had built a bulwark of scrap metal and concrete debris during WWII. Almost 40 years later, after moving to the Chesapeake Bay, Gouldsbrough brought her idea to Smith-Midland Corp., where they started manufacturing, installing and testing Beach Prisms.

One of the first sites to make use of the Beach Prisms was Terrapin Nature Center on the Chesapeake Bay. Fifteen years later, the Lane Engineering Company completed a follow-up report showing that 7,465 tons of new sand had been replenished along the shore.

After proving the product over the years,

the company is expanding its reach. "We're excited to be able to start offering this product to property owners in North Carolina," says Louis Marusik, general manager at Smith-Carolina. "A lot of people seem hesitant at first to make an investment in any sort of erosion-control product, but what happens is while you're trying to decide, a big storm comes up and you lose 15 feet of property. The longer you wait, the more land you lose."

The advantages of Beach Prisms are two-fold: they help erosion problems and protect the wildlife in the coastal ecosystem. "With Beach Prisms, you not only stop erosion, but also over time you will see some of your beach being built back up," Marusik says. In addition, the prisms provide a wonderful habitat for small creatures such as crabs, fish and turtles to escape their natural predators, and they protect the beach area and subsequent tidal pools, helping keep the coastal ecosystem within balance. ■

For more information on Beach Prisms, visit www.smithcarolina.biz or call 336.349.2905.