

Erosion group learns about beach prisms

By Cindy Bech

Special to The Banner

The meeting of the Dorchester Shoreline Erosion Group was held on Oct. 17 at the Church Creek Volunteer Fire Company.

Guest Speaker was John (Jay) McKenna, Regional Sales Manager, Beach Prisms, Smith-Midland Corp.

After World War II, an English grandmother noticed that sand was accumulating behind a bulwark of scrap metal and concrete debris created to deter a German landing on the Cornwall Coast of England.

She and her husband, a marine biologist, created a prototype which was never produced. A current example of beach prisms is the Terrapin Nature Area in Queen Ann County where 14,000 acres were created.

Smith-Midland Corp. has designed pre-cast concrete prisms, 4 feet tall x 4 feet wide x 10 foot long blocks which are placed par-

allel to the shoreline. They are made of sulphate resistant concrete. The prisms also create a haven for turtles and crabs. Geometric slots cast in the prisms dissipate the wave energy, and replenish sand along the shoreline. They are delivered 5 to a truckload. The installation cost is \$160 per linear foot. Each prism weighs 9,100 pounds. They are installed up to 40 feet off shore using a crane, barge, or pontoons hauled by a Boston Whaler. It is not necessary to import sand and there is spontaneous grass growth. The county allows beach prisms in creeks.

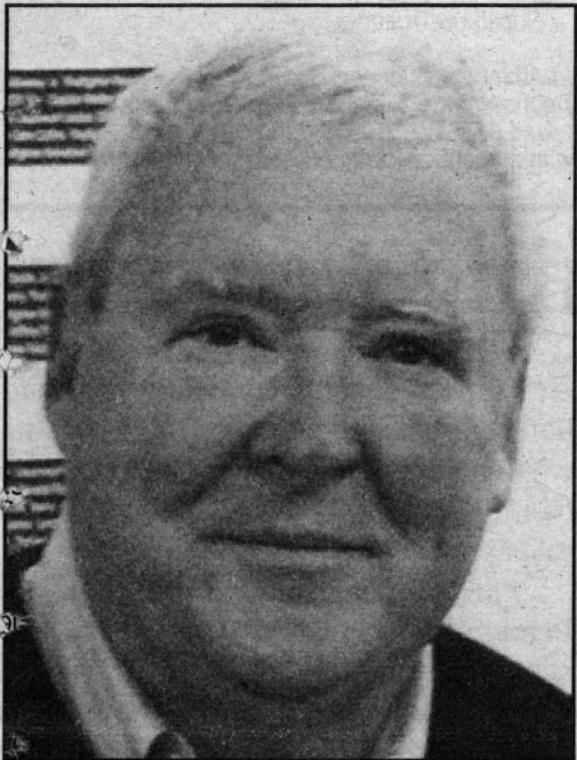
Vetiver grass, sometimes used in conjunction with the prisms is also used as a base for perfumes. It grows in a straight line and allows water to filter while stopping the sand. The plant has a consistency like a whisk broom, grows about 4 feet high, grows roots as long as 7 feet, grows

in sand, is salt resistant, and snakes don't like it. New growth sprouts off the roots like a rhizome. It stopped erosion at an army base in Louisiana where tanks consistently ran over it. In Haiti 160,000 acres were planted with Vetiver to stop erosion. Unfortunately, much of it was uprooted to get the oils for perfume.

Jay will visit your property and determine if it will work or not and give a quote. There is a monthly meeting in Annapolis at U.S. Fish and Wildlife where a committee reviews and evaluates projects.

To contact Jay: the email address is: jmckenna@smithmidland.com; by phone: 410/703-4656. The website is: www.beachprisms.com

Editor's note: Ms. Bech is secretary for the Dorchester Shoreline Erosion Group. email: cindy_bech@verizon.net



John McKenna