

**FINAL REPORT FOR 2020
ON THE CONDITION OF THE MUNICIPAL BEACHES
IN
THE TOWNSHIP OF UPPER, CAPE MAY COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**



An aerial view of Strathmere, taken November 29, 2020, showing the majority of Strathmere as winter commenced. The beach widths appear quite sufficient to maintain a level of storm protection going forward. Offshore bar material resides along the northern oceanfront water's edge. (Photo by Ted Kingston).

**PREPARED FOR: THE TOWNSHIP OF UPPER
PO BOX 205
TUCKAHOE, NEW JERSEY 08250**

**PREPARED BY: THE STOCKTON UNIVERSITY COASTAL RESEARCH CENTER
30 WILSON AVENUE
PORT REPUBLIC, NJ 08241
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**Annual Report for 2020
To
The Township of Upper
On the Condition of the Municipal Beaches in Strathmere**

Introduction

The Strathmere beaches were surveyed quarterly by the Stockton University Coastal Research Center (CRC) to document changes during 2020. The survey comparisons provide data to evaluate seasonal shoreline and sand volume variations. Seasonal surveys at the six established sites allow the Township to evaluate the performance of the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) project, conditions following storm events and general changes to the Strathmere beaches independent of the USACE efforts. Data collected at the six oceanfront beach profile locations cover the municipal beaches from Seaview Avenue to 1st Street. This coverage extends the length of the USACE engineered beach in Strathmere.

The USACE Ocean City to Townsends Inlet Shore Protection Project initially placed approximately 1.54 million cubic yards of sand on the Strathmere end of Ludlam Island. An additional 4.09 million cubic yards of sand were placed on the southern Ocean City and Sea Isle City beaches, all complete by 2016. Storm frequency was at or less than normal between 2018 and the end of 2020 with a fortuitously low intensity for all of those that did occur. Two sequential storms did occur in late December 2020 (Dec. 16th and 24th). Wave heights and tidal surges were present, but without marked specific event impact. In response to earlier storm events, the US Army Corps had contractors return to both the south end of Ocean City and Strathmere during 2019 to pump additional remedial sand supplies onto both municipal beaches, derived from the Corson's Inlet borrow zone in the ebb-tidal delta.

Winter Storm Activity

Few northeast storms occurred during the early months of 2020 and only Tropical Storm Isaias generated hurricane-related events this past year by tracking across NJ from inland into New England. Damage was seen from the winds, but severe storm wave damage was fortunately reduced by the storm center's passage inland. The fall produced little in the way of storms until the two December events mentioned above. These did occur 8 days apart but did not produce serious dune erosion. The beach profiles were reduced in gradient and sand was moved offshore.

Engineered Beach Overview

The Corson's Inlet to Townsend's Inlet shore protection project will provide a very large measure of long-term protection to this segment of the NJ coastline. There is an agreement to continue maintenance of the project for 45 additional years (its inception was in 2015). The maintenance cycle will vary between 4 and 6-year intervals unless impacted by future major storms and was most recently implemented with work in both Strathmere and southern Ocean City during 2019 using Corson's Inlet sand. As of 2016, the USACE project has provided over 3 million cubic yards of sand derived from 2 miles offshore, never previously present anywhere within the modern NJ coastal zone either at the inlets or on the barrier island shoreline.

Beach Monitoring Program Methodology

The beach monitoring program extends back to June 1995 when the Township of Upper requested that the CRC design and establish a means to provide information on coastal zone management issues within the municipality. Initially, six sites were selected to survey and allow calculations to provide information on beach behavior. In 2009, three additional beach profile stations (UT-21, UT-31, and UT-7) were established in sections that did not have profiles to monitor sediment movement within groin compartments and along Corson's Inlet. In 2009, it was decided to discontinue the 9 existing sites and monitor semi-annually the 200-

foot spaced baseline cross sections used during construction of the 2009 Upper Township beach nourishment project to quantify performance and meet monitoring requirements for a FEMA category “G” engineered beach. This process continued until the USACE took command of the project in 2016. FEMA always steps back from storm disaster reimbursement if the USACE is involved with shore protection projects, so the original six cross sections were resumed to provide the municipal governing body with direct information on beach performance since the USACE only monitors projects annually IF funds are available.

Each site is located in specific regions of the Strathmere shoreline. UT-1 is positioned at the Sea Isle City border on the mid-island straight shoreline. UT-2 is also located on the mid-island portion of Ludlam Island. UT-3 is in a transition zone between straight shoreline orientation and the increasing influence from Corson’s Inlet. UT-4 is central in the transition zone, while UT-5 is at a location where inlet processes and offshore waves tend to faithfully deposit sand maintaining a wide beach. UT-6 is located at Seaview Avenue at the northeast corner of development where dramatic shoreline changes, driven by inlet dynamics, frequently produce severe erosion, interspersed with extensive sand deposition creating a wide beach with a broad sandy expanse extending into the Corson’s Inlet opening as the NJ State park lands. The following is a list of the surveys that are included in this report and the dates they were completed:

- Survey 76 March 17, 2020
- Survey 77 June 2, 2020
- Survey 78 September 16, 2020
- Survey 79 December 15, 2020

Specific Profile Site Descriptions:

Figure 1 shows the locations of the 6 cross section locations used for this analysis.



Figure 1. Locations of the 6 beach profile stations for the engineered beach in Upper Township.

Individual Site Review

The four surveys completed during 2020 are grouped in order to review the changes observed over the past 12 months. Beach volume and shoreline changes were calculated from each seasonal change between March 2020 and December 2020. Photos for each site are included to show the beach conditions during specific time frames throughout the year. Table 1 shows the annual sand volume change at the six monitoring profile locations since December 2019.

**Table 1 - Annual Shoreline & Sand Volume Change at the 6 Monitoring Profiles
December 2019 to December 2020**

Profile	Shoreline Change (feet)	Volume Change (yds³/ft)	Avg. Volume Change (yds³/ft)	Distance Between (feet)	Net Volume Change (yds³)
<i>Southern Township Boundary</i>					
UT-1	15	8.60			
			21.0	1,410	29,618
UT-2	93	33.42			
			41.7	2,938	122,550
UT-3	50	50.01			
			-18.0	2,242	-40,313
UT-4	-137	-85.97			
			-87.0	1,323	-115,127
UT-5	-96	-88.07			
			-85.8	911	-78,163
UT-6	-34	-83.53			
<i>Northern Township Boundary</i>					
			Total Volume Change =		-81,436

This annual set of surveys partially reverses last year's gain of 178,222 cubic yards cubic yards of sand focused on UT-4, UT-5 and UT-6, each with over 83 yds³/ft. lost from the beach. Sand transfer produced decent gains in sand at the southern three locations as littoral transport shifted material to the south. Spring and summer sand volume gains helped offset the final loss seen during the fourth quarter of 2020 (-105,312 cubic yards).



Figure 2. This December 27, 2020 view shows the entirety of Corson's Inlet with the offshore bar systems well defined by breaking waves near the beach and on the shoals off the north side of the inlet. The array of beach widths seems to reflect relative stability for the moment as do the survey transects. (Photo by Ted Kingston)

Table 2 - 3rd Quarter Sand Volume & Shoreline Changes for 2020
June 2 to September 16, 2020

Profile	Shoreline Change (feet)	Volume Change (yds ³ /ft)	Avg. Volume Change (yds ³ /ft)	Distance Between (feet)	Net Volume Change (yds ³)
<i>Southern Township Boundary</i>					
UT-1	15	11.09	14.6	1,410	20,520
UT-2	93	18.02	19.1	2,938	56,075
UT-3	5	20.15	3.3	2,242	7,332
UT-4	-30	-13.61	-13.0	1,323	-17,177
UT-5	13	-12.35	-44.5	911	-40,510
UT-6	-176	-76.58			
<i>Northern Township Boundary</i>					
Total Volume Change =					26,240

The third quarter change to the Strathmere beach was one of accumulation of sand on the southern shoreline contrasted with erosion along the northern three sites with the worst loss seen at the Seaview Avenue location. The net gain was relatively small.

**Table 3 - 4th Quarter Sand Volume & Shoreline Changes for 2020
September 16 to December 16, 2020**

Profile	Shoreline Change (feet)	Volume Change (yds ³ /ft)	Avg. Volume Change (yds ³ /ft)	Distance Between (feet)	Net Volume Change (yds ³)
<i>Southern Township Boundary</i>					
UT-1	52	-1.33			
			-7.7	1,410	-10,798
UT-2	12	-13.99			
			-6.0	2,938	-17,606
UT-3	-6	2.00			
			-7.0	2,242	-15,693
UT-4	-29	-16.00			
			-29.4	1,323	-38,920
UT-5	-81	-42.84			
			-24.5	911	-22,295
UT-6	40	-6.11			
<i>Northern Township Boundary</i>					
Total Volume Change =					-105,312

The fourth quarter 2020 survey found that erosion was relatively uniformly distributed across all six profiles with only UT-3 showing positive changes at very small numbers of cubic yards of sand per foot of shoreline. This was the quarter with the largest cumulative sand volume loss for the year, but still well below the sand quantity the Corps placed during the fourth quarter of 2019 to mitigate earlier losses to the US Army project (317,238 cubic yards).

**Table 4 - Quarterly & Annual Sand Volume Changes for 2020
December 12, 2019 to December 16, 2020**

Profile #	Winter <i>surv 75-76</i>	Spring <i>surv 76-77</i>	Summer <i>surv 77-78</i>	Fall <i>surv 78-79</i>	Annual <i>surv 75-79</i>
UT-1	-2.9	4.0	11.1	-1.3	8.6
UT-2	13.5	0.0	18.0	-14.0	33.4
UT-3	8.8	0.6	20.2	2.0	50.0
UT-4	-17.7	-33.4	-13.6	-16.0	-86.0
UT-5	-12.1	-20.7	-12.4	-42.8	-88.1
UT-6	44.0	-26.5	-76.6	-6.1	-83.5
TOTALS	24,964	-91,254	26,240	-105,312	-81,436

The winter quarter was one of two where the Strathmere beaches gained sand volume, with a gain that is expected during the summer quarter. The fall of 2020 was not particularly stormy, but sand loss was spread non-uniformly across all but one site (UT-3). The beach and dunes were generally localities of gain in sand while the offshore region dominantly lost sediment as the bar system declined in total mass offshore especially at UT-5 (Williams Avenue).

*If one sums the quarterly total sand volume change numbers, the result is -145,362 cubic yards which generates a far larger annual sand loss value than the direct comparison of surveys 75 and 79 (-81,436 cubic yards). A complete review of the four quarterly surveys found that the March 2020 surveys were of reduced length into the ocean due to wave conditions that prevented the swimmers from reaching the final objective between 1,200 and 1,400 feet from the reference. This essentially reduced the offshore coverage where in the December 2019 to March 2020 comparisons and those between March and June 2020, the material accumulating as offshore bar systems was not surveyed. In the annual comparison, for example, there was a 45.83 yds³/ft. increase seen between 860 and 1,220 feet from the reference at UT-3. The March survey failed to reach that distance seaward and missed those gains making the summation of the quarterly changes show a more severe loss than that seen in the direct annual comparison. The direct comparison represents the actual sand volume change value across the Strathmere oceanfront.

◆ **Seaview Avenue, UT-6**

This site is located adjacent to Corson's Inlet making it highly vulnerable to rapid beach changes from inlet dynamics and northeast storms. The USACE intervened during the fall of 2019 to address the loss with added sand from Corson's Inlet. Inlet dynamics were causing shoreline retreat into the dunes at Seaview Avenue. The added sand volume restored the wide dry beach width that while suffering some retreat over 2020, remains an effective shoreline protection as of this writing.



3a. December 12, 2019



3b. June 1, 2020



3c. December 15, 2020

Figures 3a to 3c. Seaview Avenue survey site. View to the south.

Photograph 3a was taken on December 12, 2019 following completion of project maintenance by the USACE. The restored dune was not vegetated or fenced, but the beach width has been restored to the design specifications.

Photograph 3b shows that by June 2020 grass had been planted on the restored dune with the pedestrian walking path to the beach defined by split rail fencing.

Photograph 3c shows a view to the south a year following the last sand placement with wind deposition showing at the dune toe and a sufficiently wide beach remaining at the site.

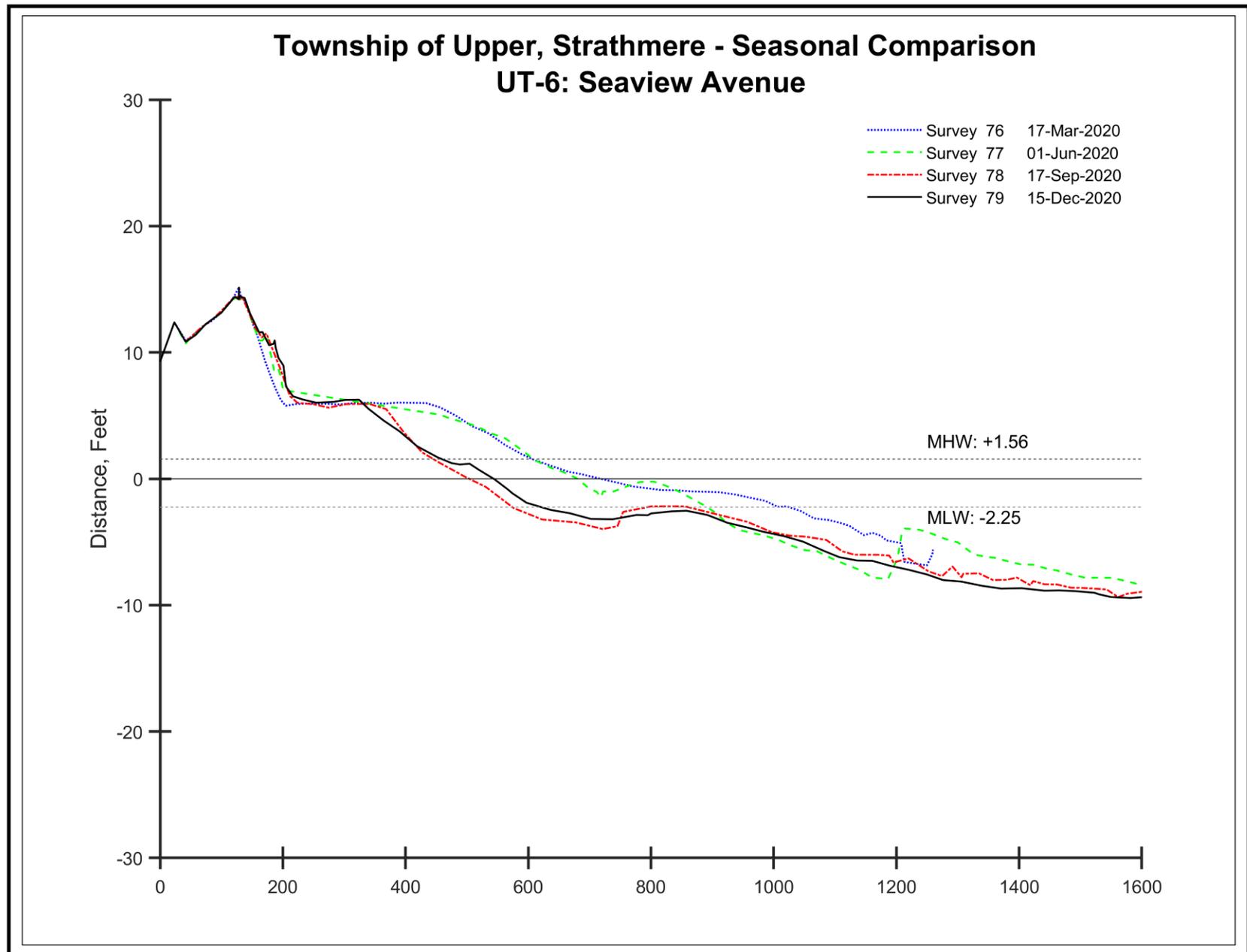


Figure 4. Sand readily accumulated at the seaward dune slope following the December 2019 dune and beach restoration by the USACOE. Between June and September substantial berm retreat occurred along with a substantial lowering of the offshore profile elevation. Minimal change occurred between the September and December surveys.

◆ **Survey Line UT-5, Williams Avenue, Strathmere**

This site was first nourished in 1984 and is located near the southern limit for direct inlet influences. The site has been monitored since 1986 as part of the NJBPN program and was included in the municipal monitoring project. Sand is intermittently added to the beach in this region as tidal delta bars accumulate off adjacent ebb shoals and migrate landward under favorable conditions to attach themselves to the shoreline providing influxes of sand.

The Williams Avenue site was not provided massive sand volumes initially in the federal project. However, recent rates of erosion prompted a significant fill by December 2019. The fill volume was 116.67 yds³/ft. which produced a 272-foot shoreline advance. The major shift was at the berm crest between September and December 2020 where the crest retreated about 75 feet landward. Bar configurations changed offshore as well creating a loss in sand volume.



5a. December 12, 2019



5b. June 1, 2020



5c. December 15, 2020

Figures 5a to 5c. UT-5 survey site on Williams Avenue.

Figure 5a is a view of the beach after the federal maintenance widened the beach and added sand to the dune area seaward of the existing grass.

Figure 5b was taken in June 2020 looking south from the dune showing a sizable grass mortality among plants installed following installation during the federal project. The satellite plants along the wind-generated fore dune ridge appear to have thrived.

Figure 5c shows the beach surface from the seaward dune toe to the water line as of the end of 2020.

Township of Upper, Strathmere - Seasonal Comparison UT-5 Williams Avenue (NJBPN #121)

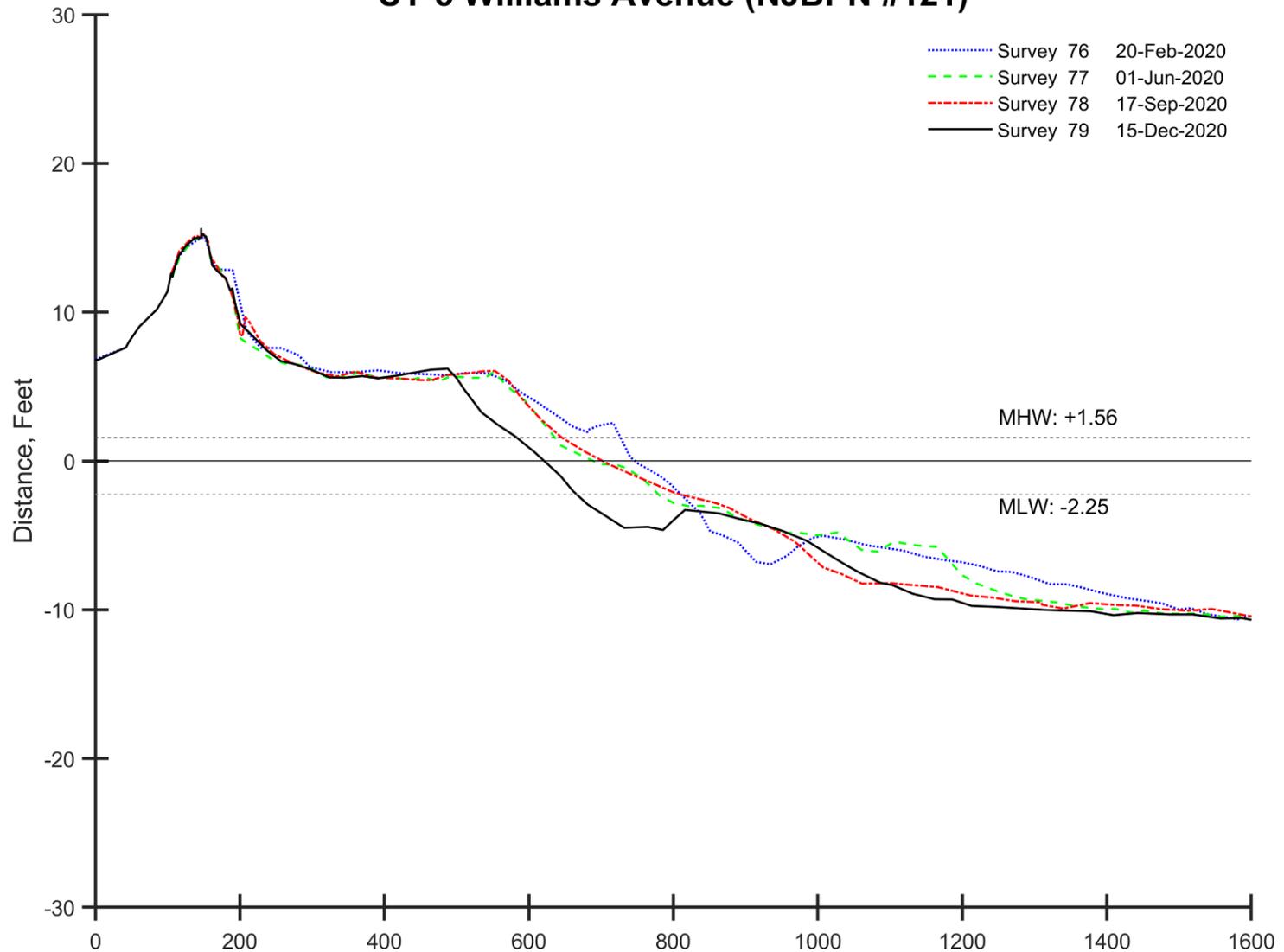


Figure 6. The site is still within influence derived from tidal currents associated with Corson’s Inlet. Sand deposited offshore forms into bars which migrate landward to attach to the beach. This occurred between June and September followed by a 75-foot berm retreat by December 2020 but with another bar poised to move onto the beach just offshore.

◆ **Survey Location UT-4, Tecumseh Avenue, Strathmere;**

This profile location was established because the shoreline dynamics are very different between the Williams Avenue (UT-5) and Jasper Avenue (UT-3) sites related to the influence of the ebb-tidal shoals of Corson's Inlet. Jasper Avenue performs more like a mid-island beach where losses are mainly directed toward the south with cross-shore sand redistributions the major component of change. Tecumseh Avenue lies mid-way between the two different beach configurations and was surrounded by obsolete timber bulkhead and timber groin arrays. These structures were installed decades previously and are currently buried in the beach project sand.

The USACE sponsored beachfill was completed by July 2015 which significantly extended and elevated the dune and beachface seaward. The most recent maintenance effort provided 72.36 yds³/ft. in new sand on the beach yielding a 153-foot shoreline advance seaward. The project tapered off further south with no new sand added at Jasper Avenue (UT-3).

Two episodes of beach berm retreat occurred during 2020, the first between March and June 2020, while the second occurred between September and December 2020. Both events were similar in magnitude and were accompanied by extensive offshore bar migration between June and September.



Figure 7a. December 12, 2019



Figure 7b. June 1, 2020



Figure 7c. December 15, 2020

Figure 7a shows the federal project was completed generating a wider beach, with some sand wind-transported into the dunes and onto the upper dry beach.

Figure 7b shows the summer beach in June of 2020 with more wind deposition at the accreting foredune fencing enhanced with beach grass expanding onto its surface.

Figure 7c is almost the exact perspective as figure 7a above and shows minimal change to the primary dune field as all the added material was deposited on the mid-beach foredune to the right side of the photograph.

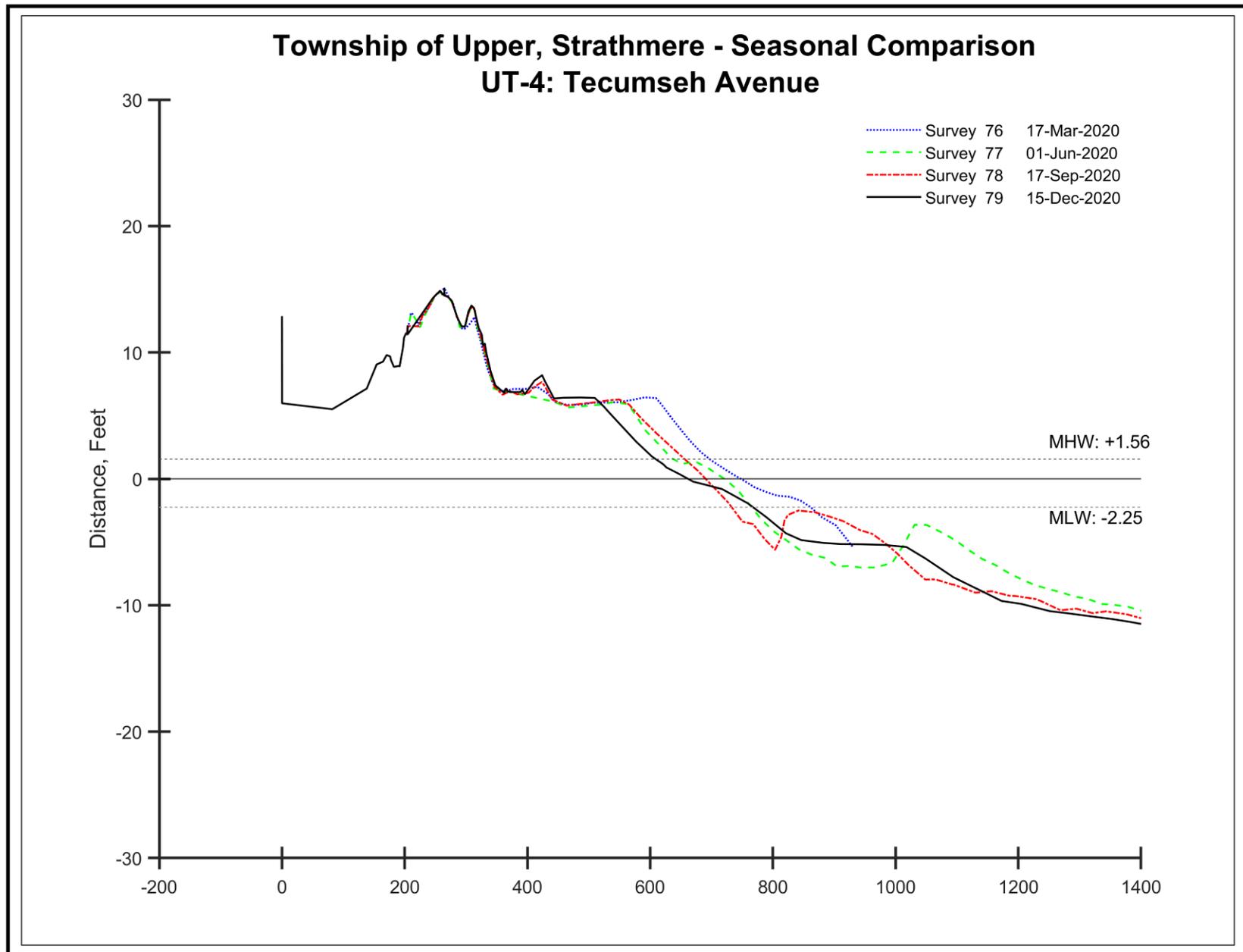


Figure 8. This location saw large offshore bars appear in the June survey and migrate over 200 feet closer to the beach by September. The berm retreated in two cycles between March and June and again between September and December where the offshore bar system decreased significantly in elevation but filled in the trough landward of the bar crest.

◆ **Survey Line UT-3, Jasper Avenue, Strathmere;**

Jasper Avenue is the first of three sites located along the central part of the island known as “Whale Beach”. This segment has been notoriously narrow and subject to repeated overwash to the bay. Storms through the 1990’s breached the dune here four times resulting in serious damage to a group of homes built east of Commonwealth Avenue immediately north and south of Jasper Avenue. Since the 2001 NJ State and local beach project, the situation has improved dramatically. Hurricane Sandy did not penetrate the dunes largely because of a final NJ State/local project completed in 2009.

By July 2015, the USACE sponsored beachfill was completed which elevated and extended the berm position seaward nearly 250 feet. Following June of 2016, the USACE had completed the northeast storm “Jonas” (January 24, 2016) restoration.

No maintenance sand from the USACE was directly placed at this location but the site saw four quarterly sand volume increases totaling 32 yds³/ft. during 2020 accompanied by a 50-foot shoreline advance between Dec. 2019 and Dec. 2020. During the four quarterly 2020 surveys the shoreline position changed minimally (-11, +5, and -6 feet). The large shoreline advance seaward of 62 feet came between Dec. 2019 and March 2020.



9a. December 12, 2019



9b. June 1, 2020



9c. December 15, 2020

Photo 9a shows the development of dune grass on the dry beach surface since the initial federal work was completed in 2016. Each summer this area expands and acts as a sand trap for wind transported material.

Photograph 9b shows the view to the north taken from the primary dune crest across the new foredune to show the greatly expanded beach and dune system now present at UT-3.

Photograph 9c is a view along the sand fence to the north showing minimal sand accumulation at the fence, but additions in the foredune area on the dry beach surface.

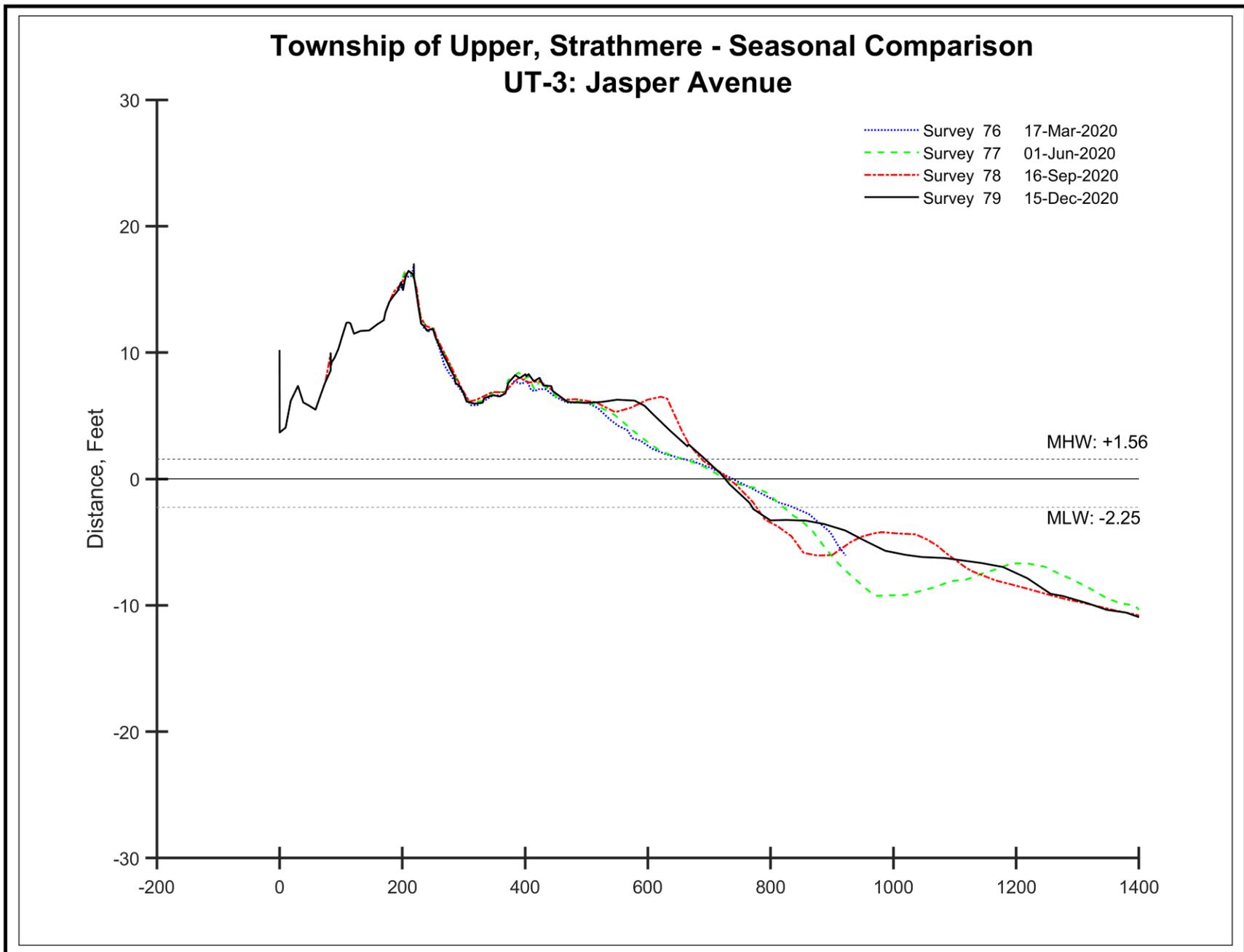


Figure 10. All the dune accretion took place on the emerging foredune seaward of the primary feature. The beach berm developed a major new crest position shown on the Sept. survey. This new crest retreated at the higher elevation as sand was washed further landward. The shoreline position did not change. The shortened March survey failed to collect data on the offshore bar conditions leading to a lower sand volume gain volume beyond 950 feet.

◆ **Survey Line UT-2, 2400 Commonwealth Avenue, Strathmere;**

This site is located directly seaward of the residence at 2400 Commonwealth Avenue in the southern segment of the Strathmere shoreline. This region has been more resilient than First Avenue with no documented episodes of dune breaching or overwash during the CRC monitoring for the Township. The state, local and federal beach nourishment efforts have significantly enhanced the beach and dune.

The post-Jonas northeast storm restoration was complete by June 2016 with a wider beach due to an added 56.01 yds³/ft. placed at the site. No new sand was directly added to this location during the most recent USACOE efforts.

The summer of 2020 added a wider, higher elevation berm crest to the beach which increased further between Sept. and December surveys. The accumulation of sand around grass outliers on the dry beach does not extend this far south along the oceanfront.



11a. December 12, 2019



11c. December 15, 2020



Figure 11b. June 2, 2020

Figure 11a shows a view from December 2019 where the grass became distributed more naturally as the planted plugs spread out and seaward onto the foredune area.

Photograph 11b shows a wide dry beach leading up to the expanding seaward dune slope with grass migrating down slope onto the upper beach.

Photograph 11c is a beach view at the toe of the dune across the open beach. The pattern of change is only one where the beach appears wider than it did in June 2020.

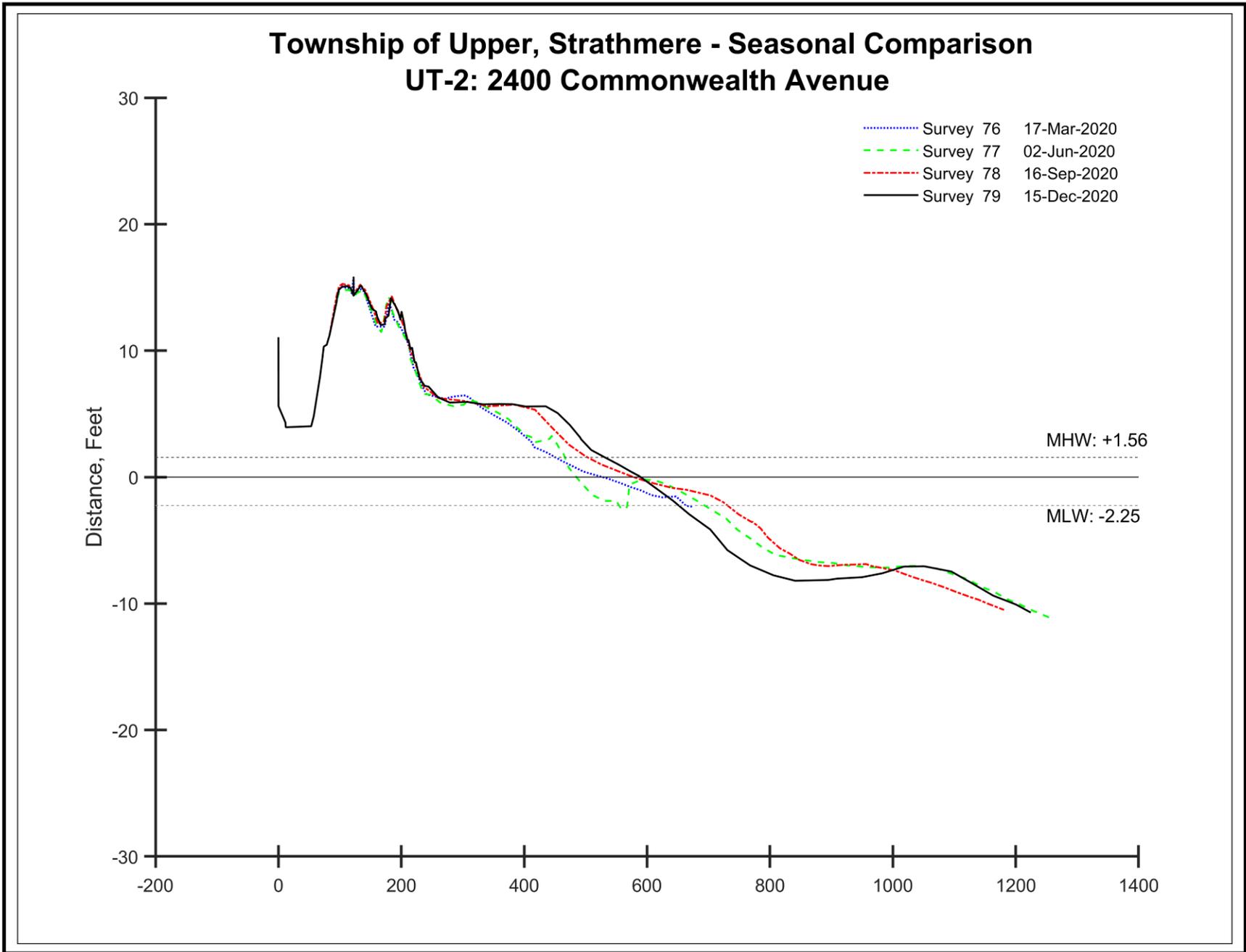


Figure 12. The past year saw sand added to the berm widening the beach by about 25 feet at the zero-elevation point and by over 100 feet at the berm crest elevation. Sand was transferred onto the beach between September and December 2020 specifically in the nearshore area.

◆ **Survey Line UT-1, First Street (NJBPN #120), Strathmere;**

This profile site is actually a few yards inside Sea Isle City but was established in 1986 for a NJ State beach monitoring program. Acting as the southernmost site in Upper Township, this location suffered from overwash during any moderate northeaster. In fact, the segment to the south of the site was so persistently over-washed, that the County undertook the installation of 10-foot diameter geo-textile tubes as dune core along 2,400 feet of the beach into Sea Isle City in 1996. The geo-textiles replaced the use of I-5 gravel used as road grade base in the core of the primary dune. Another failed attempt was the placement of the first generation of “Beachsaver Reefs” in the proximal nearshore sub-tidal zone to mitigate wave energy striking the beach. These were removed shortly after they subsided into the sand and marsh mat under the sand by order of the NJDEP.

The USACE sponsored beachfill was completed by July 2015 which significantly extended and elevated the dune and beachface seaward. The post-Jonas disaster declaration USACE restoration was complete by June 2016 with a wider beach and an added 26.86 yds³/ft. placed at the site. This site lies well south of the 2019 maintenance effort focused on the northern half mile of the oceanfront.

The current year produced sediment accumulation as littoral movement of sand migrated to this site adding to the berm by September. The beach is wider, but the sand has been derived from sites north of Tecumseh Avenue.



13a. December 12, 2019



13b. June 2, 2020



13c. December 15, 2020

Photograph 13a provides the winter view to the north across the dune and onto the beach. The decrease in beach berm width is evident in the picture.

Photograph 13b shows the beach six months later when sand had added to the berm increasing the beach width. Summer growth has added luxuriant vegetative cover to the dune.

Photograph 13c is a view to the north at the seaward toe of the dunes across the beach showing the extent of sand accumulation. These three views show far more sand present than was on the site prior to the federal project completion.

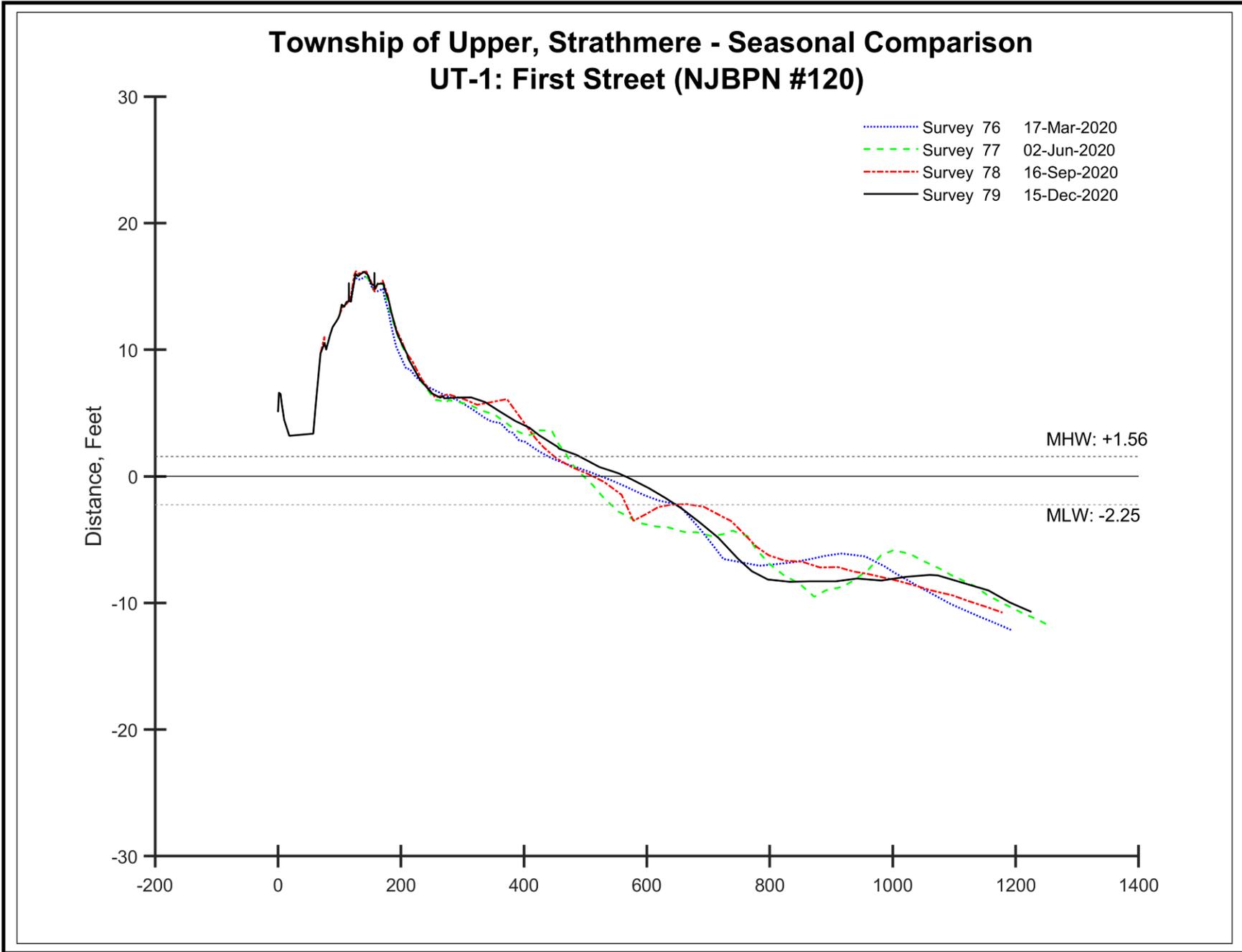


Figure 14. Sand was carried to the seaward primary dune slope this year while material appearing offshore migrated up onto the dry beach by December 2020. This is evidence that littoral transfer has moved sand from near the inlet south onto the mid-island beaches.

Summary & Conclusions

The 2015 federal project placed approximately 1.54 million cubic yards of sand on the north end of Ludlam Island that included the Strathmere oceanfront beaches. The USACE returned to repair the storm damage from Northeast Storm Jonas under a Federal Disaster Declaration with sand derived from Corson's Inlet ebb-tidal delta borrow zone.

During 2018, serious erosion problems cropped up between Williams Avenue and the State Park, taking away the beach and slicing into the dune at Seaview Avenue. The Township moved sand by truck from south of Williams Avenue to the scarp in the Seaview dune, but the losses continued. The Great Lakes Dredge and Dock dredge returned to Corson's Inlet borrow zone in 2019 funded by USACE maintenance dollars for work both in southern Ocean City as well as northern Strathmere. This effort added 365,955 cubic yards of new sand from the inlet source. This number does not include sand placed into the State Park north of Seaview Avenue site since the CRC does not survey in the park. The sites to the north including UT-4 (Tecumseh Ave.) site received sand, while the UT-3 location at Jasper Avenue did not.

The summer and early fall saw sand losses at the two northern locations with modest change at UT-4, all followed by accumulation of material at UT-3, -2 and -1 at the Sea Isle City boundary. This material was moved by the waves as littoral transport away from the inlet and into the mid-island segment of Strathmere.

The annual sand volume lost to the Strathmere beaches was 81,436 cubic yards extracted from Seaview and Williams Avenues with smaller deficits occurring at UT-3 at Tecumseh Avenue. The southern three sites gained 152,168 cubic yards as the northern three sites were shedding 233,604 cubic yards that produced the net annual loss above. The net loss represents 34.9% of the northern three location's annual loss meaning the other 65.1% of the mobilized material was redeposited on the southern Strathmere beaches by littoral transport.